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## DISCUSSION BOOKS

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## THE CHANGING VILLAGE

*No. 25*





*Frontispiece*



*{Photo: Peter Hennessy, A.R.P.S.*

“This earth . . . this England.”

# THE CHANGING VILLAGE

AN ESSAY ON RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

*by*

F. G. THOMAS



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## PREFACE

THIS book really belongs to the people of Devon. During the past eleven years I have lived and worked among them, learning from them the ways of country life, and experiencing with them some of the values inherent in a rural civilization. Moreover, many people of the South-West co-operated with me in two series of talks broadcast from the West Regional Station of the British Broadcasting Corporation, the first of which was called "The Changing Village," and the second, "Running the County." Village people co-operated by sharing in the broadcast talks, by forming listening groups, by corresponding after each broadcast and, in twenty-six villages, by making a social survey of their own local conditions. Although I have not reprinted the broadcasts here—they have already been published in *The Listener*—I have used very fully the evidence on rural conditions gained through editing and broadcasting at that time.

However, I am fully aware that many country people, and many people living in the country, will disagree with the general thesis of this book. I can only hope that they will view charitably, if not objectively, my commentary on rural life, and that they will extend to the main argument the same friendly comprehension I have known so often in previous discussions with them on these matters.

## PREFACE

I am indebted to the Editor of the *Journal of Adult Education* for permission to quote in Chapter II. from an article written jointly with my wife and published in that journal. Professor R. A. Oliver and Mr. J. W. Tibble have helped very considerably in the preparation of the manuscript. Finally, I cannot acknowledge adequately the constant help, the detailed and constructive criticism which my wife has given throughout, and which have contributed in no small measure to whatsoever merits this book may have.

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*October 1938.*

# THE CHANGING VILLAGE

## CHAPTER I

### *The Changing Village*

IT is assumed sometimes that the "changing village" is a peculiar feature of our own times, but this is not so. The village has persisted for so long as an effective social unit maintaining its independence and individuality because it has so often modified and adapted its mode of life to meet new social and economic demands. During the operation of the Enclosure Acts, for example, the combined effects of new farming methods and state legislation threatened the very existence of the village, yet the village survived and preserved the basis of its social organization through this and other equally difficult periods of economic re-organization. In fact, it is true to say that because of its capacity for change the social organization of the village has remained substantially the same.

Thus the village remained the centre of the economic life of its immediate area. Although there were variations in detail from village to village, the main relationships within the village and between the village and the country remained fairly constant. Some villagers might leave, others might be dispossessed of their rights, Church and civic responsibilities might be altered in the

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national interest, nevertheless the local situation still centred around accepted and traditional social positions—the squire, the parson, the free farmer and the tradesman. In spite of the intensity of the impact of modern industrialism upon the village of recent years, it is amazing how these social pivots are still the centre of village life. Although new machinery of government has been imposed on the village, accompanied by legislative commands and controls, the older form of village government has not been superseded entirely in the rural areas.

One factor in the present situation, peculiar to our days, is the proximity of a large urban population with different and attractive standards of life in the form of higher money wages, greater personal freedom, and more varied amusements. As yet, the village has not been able to counteract these attractions nor to devise any compensating relationship within this modern economic framework. There is, as yet, no organic connection between these two societies. Prior to the industrial development of England, the town was a social and economic centre of rural life. The difference between a town and a village was “one of quantity rather than of quality, of size rather than nature.” It was not easy to define the difference in other than material terms. Primarily the borough was a place of defence, and defence duties were imposed on freemen. Towns were trade centres and tradesmen claimed certain privileges and rights. Thus the town was chiefly a military and trading centre for the rural area, though in more settled times, when the factor of defence was of less importance, new towns arose as centres of industry and social activity only. Whatever their origin, all towns were an integral part of the social and economic life of a rural England. Modern industrial towns have

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no such connection ; their customs and ideals differ from those obtaining in rural areas. This change in the environment of the village is a new factor in rural life.

A second characteristic of the modern changes lies in the provision of social services by agencies outside the village. The village bids fair to become the Africa of the modern missionary. All kinds of voluntary agencies want to preserve this and promote that, to amuse, to educate, to revive the "folk" life of the country ; nothing is beyond their imaginative concern, from litter to tutorial classes. This zeal of the voluntary agency is amplified by departmental statutory regulations enforced with subtlety and skill. Should some village refuse to be co-ordinated or standardized, the social worker and the administrator are amused, and proceed, by influence through treasury grants or by administrative regulation, to enforce regularity of development. Annual reports are published in the towns showing the extent and excellence of this work, and it would appear that social facilities are being brought to the country. The difficulties are noted. The people of the village seem to like Mrs. Gamp too well, and are not enthusiastic for reform. There are physical and economic difficulties not easily solved, as, for example, in supplying water to the village. Nevertheless, the work of imposing social services on village life continues, accompanied by the decline of agriculture and rural industry.

The social patterns of village life are thus being submerged, and new patterns superimposed. No one would begrudge these efforts. They were needed. Within living memory, the parson could arrange with the squire for the summons of a parishioner—on another charge—who failed to attend church. In some villages to-day

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a Labour enthusiast would find himself so ostracized as to make his livelihood precarious. Thirty years ago, in one county, the average age of the Education Committee was higher than the average annual salary of the teachers. The modern social efforts are to be welcomed as urgently necessary, but it is discouraging to find that the older traditional society is ignored. Such a society, built through countless generations of experience, has surely something of value to offer to modern civilization. It is also discouraging to realize that while so much is done to improve the amenities, so little is done for the economic life of the village. While legislator and volunteer work hard to "improve" village conditions, village youth still leaves for the towns and only retired people with small pensions move into the village, not to live, but to die there as slowly as possible. This aspect of the problem cannot be solved by better sanitation and the like ; until it is solved, other efforts are without basis and without plan. Missionary zeal is not a virtue unless disciplined by professional skills.

It is important to note these changes more closely. The psychological reactions of the village are too often ignored in the enthusiasm to measure results statistically for annual reports. Yet these reactions are important as a comment on legislation, and for the light they throw on more general problems of country life. The obvious effect is not necessarily the most important, nor is the immediate result the most durable.

The development of roads and road transport will serve as illustration. The first roads to be developed in a county are usually those connecting the larger towns, followed by the roads extending from the towns to the villages around, these latter enlarging the "service area" of the

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town shops. Rural development is thus incidental to urban development ; the countryside is serviced only in so far as is necessary for urban purposes. Meanwhile, ancient roads, deviating in ways as made by the pack-horse or the wagon, are partially conditioned for modern use. Slowly the trade van percolates along these roads, bringing competitors to the local shopkeeper and craftsman. Along these roads the farmer drives to market hauling his cattle. These are the roads to amusement, to the evening dance, the game, and sometimes to mating. Obvious immediate effects are the appearance of silk stockings, of daily papers, agitators, Oxford Groupers, and other symbols of to-day. Education centres at the cross-roads ; advertisement, the cinema and the ubiquitous wireless follow, and new worlds of thought and conduct begin to take shape. The development of road transport has made possible more radical educational changes than the combined efforts of the parson and the schoolmaster during the whole preceding century.

Nevertheless, the development of the countryside is subordinated to other purposes. The advertisement is concerned with sales and not with the social effect of the thing sold. The countryside is a " market " to be exploited at minimum cost ; consequently, the development of roads is directed towards this end, and if rural life is enriched or degraded that is no concern of the *entrepreneur*.

Occasionally new areas have been " opened " by these methods, but this, unfortunately, usually means urbanizing strips of land alongside the highways and taking out of cultivation good farm land. Thus the future is negated to serve a present contingency. " Justification is relative," wrote Stapledon of the land surface. " If we look forward only twenty or even fifty years a certain action may

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appear eminently justifiable—while if we look forward a hundred or five hundred years the same action may amount to nothing short of criminal folly.” Short-term views are expensive. Each year’s delay in planned development intensifies the difficulties for future action and increases the cost to the State. Good soil is too precious to be overlaid needlessly, and the only justification for such action would be that major social purposes would be served. The repopulation of our rural areas might be such justification. Road development at the moment is hastening the disintegration of village life with minimum compensation.

Road development, however, is the means and not the cause of this disintegration ; but, controlled and directed, what is now a negative influence might become an important positive element in the structure of a new rural society. The present effects may be observed more closely within a limited geographical area, for only by closer examination is it possible to see the social effect of haphazard road development.

There is, for example, the village on the outskirts of a town. The village is now served frequently, regularly, and inexpensively by buses. The village becomes a dormitory for town workers, who contribute little to the life of the community. Nor are they citizens of the town ; they only work there, buy cheaply in the multiple shops, and find their amusements as part of the amorphous crowd. They seldom become part of the village community, for that life has been destroyed except for a few of the older inhabitants who gather in the inn, and for the women at the monthly meeting of the Women’s Institute. Village life has been lost in the town without sharing as part of the city corporate.

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The existence of a hill will modify this example. Equally near the same town is another village with a hill intervening. Houses have been built on the side of the slope towards the town, but not over the hill. Buses run less frequently than to the village in the valley. One or two strong personalities still dominate the village life, and something of the social unity of the village is preserved.

There are areas of rural England left derelict by transport development since the decline of the stage-coach. In these areas, the Mayor and Corporation, a reflection of previous civic glory, sometimes "run" the small market towns. The economic life of the area has dwindled, the population has drifted away, the remnants have intermarried, and the quality of the population has deteriorated. Ancient customs and occasionally even primitive orgies survive, school managers resist all attempts to alter their blacklisted schools, there is much petty social tyranny, indeed, this is a "special area." Yet the land resources remain, and goods produced could be marketed if only the will and the capacity for social development were present. The point is, there was no urban reason why transport services should be extended in these areas, no apparent reason to believe that there would be immediate returns. As a result, these areas become increasingly a charge on public funds and on industry because of the growing cost of maintaining necessary social services for a decreasing population.

There are other areas capable of economic development which are as yet untouched by road transport except by the market bus, a few private cars, and the occasional trains. These areas are almost unknown even to the tourist. Frequently within them the economic standards

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are low, and there is only a very limited market for manufactured goods from the town. Planned road development can bring these areas back into the life of the country. Such districts are not rare; they are indicative of what is happening in large areas covering many villages.

It is useful to consult a map of any county and the bus time-table for the area. The routes served should be marked plainly, the frequency of the services noted, together with the cost to the passenger and the times of the first and last bus from the town to the village. It will be found, as was expected, that the main bus routes join the major towns, and that the villages on these bus routes will be reasonably well served within a limited area. The villages between these routes have no frequent bus service, and except for the immediate areas around the towns, transport services stop in the early evening. The majority of villages in Devon, for example, are isolated after six o'clock in the evening as far as public transport is concerned. Once a week there runs a late bus from the town. Cross-country transport between villages is more unusual. In these areas, the occasional bus is obviously more expensive, and the fares charged are high in relation to agricultural wages. A shilling bus fare is a major item in the family budget of an agricultural worker. Apart from the immediate service area of the town, transport services are not so frequent or general as is often implied in discussions on this subject. These are the physical facts of road development. It is even more important to note how the villagers react to these things.

Within the village, however isolated, are two clearly defined groups of people whose attitude to these developments is of note. These are the pre-war age group

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and the post-war younger generation. The former group often includes men who visited distant places on active service. Some of them wrote home from strange places : there is some truth in the story of the village woman amazed to get a letter from her son in Jerusalem because previously she thought "it was only a place in the Bible." Many of these men returned to the village and adjusted themselves again to village life, and in common with the older folk they show very little desire to move. They seem almost as immobile as their parents. Their war-time adventures are as a tale that is told, as valid as the Bible, and as unreal as the mother's Jerusalem. Of course, the agricultural labourer cannot afford to travel, nor can he leave his work, even if he would, but this reluctance to move is more than an economic matter ; there seems neither the desire nor interest. Farmers seldom travel beyond the local market ; an annual event might take them further, but it is the adventure of a lifetime for the majority to go beyond the county. Some will defend this lack of interest by roundly condemning " this moving about " that " gets nowhere " ; and they will tell heroic tales of journeys in their youth in a cart drawn by a donkey and, " what is more, if you couldn't drive home, a chap only needed to drop the reins and leave it to the moke." The circumference of their world has not been enlarged or changed by world events.

This type of mind is dominant in the village. This is the dead weight of resistance which confronts the village nurse, the educationalist, and the agricultural adviser. This type of mind will accept all that transport brings to the village, but will not, and sometimes cannot, turn modern inventions to its own use. The blacksmith will sell petrol but he cannot own a car, can afford only occa-

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sional bus fares, and has little desire to move. He is a symbol of the village.

The other generation is indeed infatuated by mobility. The pedal cycle, the motor bike and pillion seat, are increasing in the village. Youth moves in search of pleasure, sometimes to the market-town, but quite frequently to the neighbouring village. The children are trained to think travel as commonplace as going to school ; in many counties, children over eleven years of age travel daily to the town, a weekly journey of some adventure for their parents. A new mobile generation is in the country. They go "courting" outside the village. Young Farmers' Clubs owe something of their success to this sense of mobility, for the young farmer will come some distance for his monthly meeting, and will travel some miles to visit a neighbouring club. They have indeed accepted their heritage rightly and with zest. If they have accepted also spurious values without discrimination, that is not the fault of the machine.

In varying degrees, these two generations may be found living side by side, yet in different worlds. The one, ghetto-like, reverts more to older habits of thought and tradition as new facts and ideas impinge on village life. From long tradition members of this group know how to take much and give little with all the social gestures expected of their class. They are expert in passive resistance and, as the village declines, their influence increases. This element at its best has definite ways of thought and action which are of high social value. At its lowest, this group will undermine actively the ambition of the village boy, and any other sign of progress. Two youths were members of W.E.A. classes in separate villages ; neither knew the other, but in the same year

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they were encouraged to go to a settlement for farm workers where they might continue their general education as well as receive special farming instruction. One boy was the son of a small farmer, and will probably inherit his father's farm; the other was an orphan, a farmhand with no prospects other than the standard agricultural wage. All the money was found for them except £25. A few weeks before they were due to sign the final papers, they withdrew. Each told the same story; the ridicule and opposition of the village was such that they could not endure it. There was probably some personal weakness here; but the ghetto had found it and won its fight. Previously, the farmer's son had been interviewed by a county councillor appointed to inquire into the applicant's request for a grant of £25 from the council. The application was refused for good reasons, and as the boy went out the interviewer said, "I've known your father for thirty years in — market; you do as he does with the farm and you'll be all right."

In general, however, the younger generation lives its own life, migrating to the towns at the earliest opportunity. There is practically no compensatory movement of people to the village, except for certain southern areas where "retired" people hope to eke out their pensions and their life as peaceably as possible. For them the village is the arcadia of their life; there they can recall the old victories of the field and recapture the glory of their past triumphs. To the village they are "foreigners." They add to the economic life of the village, perhaps; they give occasionally a subscription to a charity, but they add little to the social life of the village, partly because the village is the focus of their picturesque circumscribed arcadia, partly because they do not under-

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stand the villagers and the "county," and partly because the villagers regard them primarily as landless squirearchy to be exploited. Their outlook is to the past rather than the future, and for them the village serves as an immediate satisfaction. In one village lived a retired school-master of some distinction, but he did nothing to help the two or three adults trying to form an adult class. "I've finished with teaching," was his comment. This view-point is understandable, but it is little help to the community. The women-folk, often younger than the men and more ambitious socially, will sometimes be found leading in the Women's Institutes. On the whole, this migration makes no real contribution to the village.

Road development has brought new industries into the countryside. These, in turn, have sometimes brought a new working population into the area. Sometimes the result is the urbanization of an area; sometimes a rural area is revitalized. This matter must be discussed more fully later. This migration may be noted in passing as one of the more important consequences of modern transport development.

Stragglers, too, visit the village as they have done from time immemorial, though transport has increased their number and kind. The wandering entertainer, offering a programme of conjuring and films, arrives in his car. Strolling players still receive a warm welcome. The pedlar is there with manufactured "marvels" from the town. The club agent is the most recent straggler following modern transport. He has many methods of payment to suggest; for example, twenty people promise to pay a shilling each for twenty weeks. Each week, one person selected by ballot receives the goods ordered. Thus in the first week, one person gets the goods and

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continues paying for nineteen further weeks. Another will get the ordered article, and continue paying for eighteen more weeks. There are other methods of payment. The "club" habit is spreading rapidly, though it is difficult to get village people to talk about it. If the article is of good quality, the prices seem to be high; if the price is reasonable, the quality is poor. There were clubs before the bus brought the club organizer and his goods, but, on the whole, they were clubs for saving before buying, or insurance clubs, such as pig clubs, which were common in many villages. The modern club encourages spending and not saving. There is reason to believe that the modern club habit is causing some distress in families needing the goods offered, but with such low incomes that a shilling a week means less food.

One other example of the consequences of road development on the social mind of the village may be noted, namely, the appearance of the tradesman's van. The travelling salesman has always been a feature of village life. Often he was a person of considerable character, and his relationship with his customers was intimate and personal. He was friend, counsellor, and guide to his customers; a few of his type remain, but the majority have disappeared. The horse has given way to the motor. The tailor who previously travelled to the farm and made the suit in the kitchen, if he survives at all, now travels in a small car selling "ready-mades." The van of the multiple shop with its town driver competes with the village shop. Even the green-grocer's van has appeared in the village!

Against this invasion, the village store-keeper uses every ingenuity that remains to him. He is always there for

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odd requirements at odd moments, which is useful. He will give credit for small amounts. He, too, stocks canned fruits and canned milk. He gives coupons with his sales which can be redeemed by posting to some central agency. Each year this domestic business finds more difficulty in continuing, though it is seldom that a shop closes unless its goods are so specialized that adaptation is difficult. Boot and clothing stores have closed, for example, but other shops increase the range of their stock, and so become a little more "useful" and survive. The village shopkeeper exists mainly by lowering his standard of living.

The most interesting "van" is that of the Co-operative Society. The slow success of this society is of some social significance because the countryman, as a whole, has resisted all forms of co-operative enterprise in the past. The idea of a Co-operative Society cut across the personal basis of village trading. In a village one goes, not to the grocer, but to Mrs. X's shop: or even just to Mrs. X. The travelling roundsman was part of this personal relationship; he was known and welcomed, bringing pots and pans and news of the outer world. Similarly, the village shopkeeper not only sold goods, but retailed the village news—sometimes before the event. This personal goodwill could not be broken by a Co-operative organized from outside the village, which threatened the livelihood of Mrs. X. Even though the shopkeeper was unpopular, group feeling was strong enough to overcome the temptation of "dividends." The idea of co-operation was "new fangled" and suggested radicalism.

The itinerant tradesman is no longer a personality in the villages he visits; his time-sheet does not allow for gossip, he can only deliver the goods, take orders and hustle

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to the next village. He brings, however, a wide variety of goods and better services. These factors have broken through the village tradition. Thus the way is prepared for the Co-operative van if its services are as good as those of the multiple shops. Gradually village people are joining and claiming their dividends. This does not mean that the ideas of the village have turned towards Co-operatives as an ideal. Modern transport has brought the Co-operative into the village as a service ; the ideas may follow as the village learns to differentiate between one van and another.

Many of the modern social services have become available only since the development of the car. The district nurse, the drama organizer, the lecturer, the music tutor, the farm adviser, the B.B.C. "scout," and the inspectors are such modern influences. There are removals too. The schoolmaster is being replaced by the schoolmistress, and though the education of the village child is not affected, the social life of the village is poorer in that the schoolmaster was often the pivot of village social activities. Moreover, the "visiting Head" of the school is becoming too frequent, arriving in time for school and leaving as soon as school closes.

This brief summary of some of the aspects of road development and their effects indicates how the influence of new invention penetrates into every stratum of social life. The fibre of village life is being changed. There are two societies existing side by side ; new social relationships are in the making.

This may be illustrated better by examining the effect of administrative changes in village life. The full story of village government has been told many times, and it need not be repeated here. The significant Act of Parlia-

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ment for the present discussion was passed in 1888,<sup>1</sup> and established a system of local government for the rural areas. The government of squirearchy was to be replaced by a series of freely elected councils with defined and interrelated permissive and statutory powers. The countryside was to be governed at the base by the parish meeting or the parish council: these were grouped into rural districts with another governing council and more extended powers. The county council was established as the major autonomous governing body. Within this framework more populous areas were given an urban district council, while many centres having ancient civic rights maintained these with certain modifications. Some administrative powers were necessarily taken away from the Justices of Peace, who had largely governed the village, and who, in fact, were the squirearchy.

But the personal relationships in the village were not easily regimented. There seemed to be little enthusiasm for the new opportunities of democracy. The farmer, the tradesman, and the parson monopolized the smaller councils; the squire, the landowner, and the titled gentry dominated the county council. The people showed little desire to elect work-folk as representatives; nor could such afford to accept nomination. Thus the new legislative machinery was taken over by the same social groups which "ran" the village previously, and the new form of administration developed alongside the personal administration of the village squirearchy. There are thus two forms of government existing together.

Yet, in spite of "backward" councillors, reactionary school managers, and dilatory "correspondents" of

<sup>1</sup> Parish and District Councils were established in 1894.

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local committees, amazing developments have taken place in fifty years. In 1934, for example, the county councils of England were administering some twenty-seven million pounds in addition to the special rates operative within the counties, while for the year 1938-39 the rate receipts of the county councils of England are estimated to be £36,450,000. Criticism of rural government often ignores the progress that has been achieved in so short a time by rural councillors prompted and aided by an increasing, efficient, and effective local civil service.

This situation puzzles and irritates the political organizer of the towns anxious to see "democracy" established in the village. His Marxian training prejudices his mind against any form of government not dominated by working-class votes. Prior to national elections, he makes rapid incursions into the village and provides some liveliness. He is welcomed as a diversion, and gains some votes, but the majority of the villagers follow the advice of the church bells, "'Tis as 'twas, 'tis as 'twas." Still, some of the ideas of the political visitor remain; a phrase is remembered and germinates, as the growing rural labour vote indicates. The organizer is right when he realizes that he is fighting tradition and social relationship. He is wrong when he dismisses the opposition to his ideas as prejudice, tyranny, or corruption. His government experience is based on urban relationships to which rural government has only a superficial similarity, because the basis in actual life is entirely different. Urban plans have been superimposed on the rural community, and the people of the countryside have taken the machinery of government, and used it in their own way. The democracy of the countryside is different from that of the towns, though it is not necessarily better or worse.

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The reaction of the village to this "change" is illuminating. The machinery of government set up in the rural areas was a modification of the urban experience of the nineteenth-century struggles to achieve democracy. Nineteenth-century democracy assumed the equal rights of every man to form his own opinions, and to express his decisions through the ballot box. The complexity of this problem was resolved in part by the formation of political parties with defined programmes to which candidates for election vowed their allegiance. These programmes might be affected by the individual through active membership of his local party machine. Words and phrases became counters of political patronage. Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity evoked enthusiasm and action because they challenged the rootless, formless societies of the large cities. Party promises were necessarily concerned with elementary liberties, equality of opportunity, and the re-establishment of the worker within a fraternity of his own society.

These views have been dynamic in urban local government as the workers realized that here were opportunities for immediate action. Moreover, each local enactment was visible propaganda in the immediate neighbourhood. Consequently party government has become a characteristic of many borough councils. Thus the worker has reason to believe in the efficacy of democratic government when controlled by the people. He finds it difficult to realize that the same technique of electioneering and the same machinery of party government do not apply in the country.

The Act of 1888 has given rise, of course, to some major modifications in rural government. More people are necessarily consulted, and more people share in the

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business of rural government than formerly. The central government has increased its influence and control through financial administrative machinery—much of the “progress” in county council legislation is due to pressure from London. It is often cheaper to adopt some programme with a substantial treasury grant than to ignore the measure and wholly finance a local proposal. Nevertheless the fact remains that present rural government consists of two forms : the older, personal dominance of squirearchy, and the modern, democratic government of the nineteenth century. It is not unreasonable to suppose that there is some valid reason for the continuance of an older system of government against the intensive pressure of modern political organization. In view of the acknowledged weaknesses of urban government, it may well be that rural government has some contribution to make to the solution of this problem.

Many people find it difficult to countenance such a possibility. Rural government, they think, is squirearchy, and that is bad ; the stage villain of Victorian plays—the “huntin’ and shootin’” squire—and the incompetent parson dominate their imaginations ; the farmer exploits the land and the workers ; the farm-worker is either an “idiot” or ignorant of his own self-interests. These are some of the prejudices too common in the minds of the leaders of the working-class movement.

Now no attempt is made here or elsewhere in this book to idealize the village. Rural sentimentality is reactionary and atrophies vital action. Nor is it argued that the village should be preserved or offered as an alternative to the town as a social unit. It is imperative, however, in discussing the future organization of rural life, that the values inherent in the best of past village ex-

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perience should be weighed and embodied in the present. In modern England, dominated by urban politicians, it is necessary to plead for sympathetic consideration of the other England, forgotten and neglected during the temporal triumphs of industry. This other England may have preserved traditional social experience of great value.

The decadence of so much in rural life makes this pleading difficult ; the signs of decadence are so obvious and the virtues of rural life are less easily discerned. The Church is often ineffective. In each parish the Church can maintain a university graduate in comfort—and yet how little he contributes to the life of the village in so many instances. Social pressure is used to influence votes. There are many examples of reactionary leadership and petty corruption. There is stagnation, poverty, and ignorance ; life often seems truly “nasty, poor, solitary, brutish and short.” Farmers will pack the parish meeting to block improvements which will increase the rates, especially if the farm does not benefit. The ingenuity of school managers in resisting county pressure to provide minimum requirements for the local school is incredible. More than one school teacher could tell of petty local interference and tyranny from the parson. For all this there can be explanation, but no apology.

However, an intimate knowledge of many villages will disclose real values of thought and conduct inherent in the best. Often these seem but fragmentary reflections, perhaps only aspirations, or memories of living at its noblest. In village social relationship at its best is the real liberty, equality, and fraternity which the urban mind has sought in the factual accountancy of democracy, “When each counts for one, a lamp-post will do for a second.”

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For village government, that has resisted and permeated the factual government of modern legislation, is a thing of personal adjustment and not of equations of rights. In the village hierarchy, each person has a function in relation to the whole, and this in turn implies obligations. Citizenship implies duties and privileges. These are simple concrete things ; it is expected that each will do his job well, for without this assurance the life of the village will suffer. The quality of the labourer's work, for example, will reflect this sense of obligation and the character of the man, for he works alone and with little supervision. The constant checks applied in modern industry are obviously impossible on a farm. A bad workman is a bad character. The same is true of the squire (who has wider social responsibilities), the parson, the tradesman, or the craftsman.

The squire's and the parson's " duties " include governing the village. Their training, their experience of the world, and their family tradition have been directed to this end. However bad the squire may be, the nature of his crime is that of a bad workman. He is respected in so far as he may fulfil his vocation ; but it is not to be expected that he will excel at the plough. Nor is it expected that the ploughman will succeed as a councillor. The excesses or quixotic actions of either are tolerated as long as they work as good craftsmen. Thus when the villager hears one of his own group speaking in the parish meeting he will comment that " 'taint proper to talk afore the like of they." This does not mean that he is a slave of his own class, but implies that political discussion is not his function. On pigs and wheels he will argue with the squire or the trained scientist, and follow his own decisions ; but in matters of government he admits

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his lack of training ; for that the squire has been provided, as the parson is trained for other purposes. The farm expert visiting the village finds that his knowledge and advice is doubted until he can prove his worth as a practical farmer. It is not that the villager accepts social position as a criterion of worth, but it is that every man must function in that field for which by experience and training he is well equipped. On this basis of function is built such respect as the villagers have for any one.

Again, the townsman is often misled by the touching of the cap or the curtsy to the squire. It is true that in many cases the outward symbol alone remains, but only because for generations the parson has ceased to be a second squire, and the squire himself has not functioned, and in some cases could not function, as a squire. There are many instances of the contrary, and there respect is paid by tokens such as these. The parson's case is interesting. He has always had certain spiritual responsibilities for the village, particularly in times of personal crises ; but he was expected also to be an employer of labour in the house or the gardens and the stables. As the value of the stipend decreased, the parson was unable to function in this latter way. Such respect as might remain was necessarily dependent, therefore, upon his personal qualities. Thus the swearing parson who rode to hounds might gain respect, but the swearing parson who did not hunt was not acknowledged. Few parsons can qualify these days as squires ; and the personal qualities of some previous country clergy have not invariably been deserving of personal respect.

It is thus possible for there to be real fraternity between the squire and the labourer although their mode of address and the difference in their incomes appear to the urban

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mind to belie this statement. Craftsmanship, character, and duty are the basis of rural life at its best—and these are not abstractions, but three aspects of the individual. From these the mosaic pattern of village life is made. And under the encrusted formalities of the most reactionary village group will be found something of these values. These values, forged by countless generations of rural people, have something to contribute to urban life in which too often fraternity is confused with familiarity, equality with wage rates, and liberty with rights instead of with duties.

On this social basis was superimposed rural government as devised in the towns. Consequently, the new machinery was worked in the old ways. The parish council was called and, as was "right" and "proper," the squire was elected as chairman. Parson and farmers followed in due order to fill other vacancies. So the government of the countryside was no more and no less democratic than before.

In all this the ballot box counts for little. Elections to the parish council are made by "show of hands." This may, of course, be unwise in a village, where every one is known; it is not easy to oppose the majority and continue to live at peace! On the other hand, nobody wants to ballot. A ballot is expensive. It costs money to print, distribute, and collect voting papers which will probably amount to a penny rate in small parishes. Voting itself is not popular, and is it so efficacious?

Before any major issue is decided, the squire and others concerned discuss the matter at great length; it is discussed further in the "pub" and the village shop. The wise squire, knowing the people, knows how to take both the evasive and enthusiastic response; he knows, too,

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that the powers of resistance in a village will render any unpopular venture useless ; active consent is, therefore, essential. He knows that the people will touch their cap and keep their judgment free if the question at issue is within their experience. Thus discussion precedes the council meeting, and whoever is on the council will follow this procedure. If, however, there is any sharp practice or short-circuiting of this lengthy procedure on the few issues of importance within the powers of the council, on water supplies, for example, the village will demand a poll with no uncertain voice.

A similar process precedes county council elections. Although the number of contested seats in county council elections is increasing, the majority of councillors are elected unopposed. There are many reasons for this. Only fairly wealthy people can afford the time and money to attend county council meetings. There are frequent committee meetings involving travelling expenses and meals. The meetings are held during working hours. It is, therefore, almost impossible for any working man to contemplate election even if the people would support him, which is very doubtful.

Moreover, the county seat is far removed from village life. The villagers travel there, except those living in the immediate neighbourhood, only for some exceptional annual event. County council affairs are almost as remote as the State affairs at Westminster. This sense of remoteness has many causes, including the newness of the idea of county administration. However, the rates levied and the frequent incursions of county officials into village life are overcoming this difficulty.

The county council is manned by the appropriate members of the village hierarchy, as is "proper." But,

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as has been stated previously, it is not proper to challenge the position of the governors. Consequently, county councillors often resent contested elections as a personal affront to their stewardship—it is as if the shopkeeper tried to take on the squire's duties. To be challenged is a personal matter. This is understandable. Party politics have not entered rural county councils, consequently a rival candidate represents a rival judgment, challenging the wisdom of the present member. Even progressive and young county councillors will express this point of view with some emotion. An outsider stands little chance of election ; therefore the challenger must come from within the parishes covered by the district contested, with obvious consequences, and the struggle becomes even more personal. A squire does not *fight* for his right as a squire ; he expects that responsibility to be acknowledged. Consequently, a long, tedious, and skilful process continues up to the day of nomination in order to avoid contests.

It is not easy to discover what does happen ; probably each member has his own technique. One member, for example, was of a long-respected family and a challenger was unlikely. Nevertheless he prepared a long list of people who might think themselves eligible as councillors and visited each in turn. After general conversation, the candidate suggested that the person visited should stand for the vacancy. Vanity was satisfied, and the invitation was countered by the suggestion that the caller was "the best man." Thus one rival was removed and support gained. So the long process goes on, and if the candidate is lucky he clears the field before nomination day. This may not be always the formula for exploration, but some similar process takes place when

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once a seat is vacant or an election is due. In the case quoted, one name was omitted from the list and a bitter fight followed.

Thus the method of consultation devised in village affairs is carried right through to the election of county councillors.

Urban and rural district councils present many problems of their own. These councils need drastic reorganization, for they cover a larger area than the parish, and cannot, therefore, focus the commonsense of village discussion, while they are too small and ineffective to attract to their councils the "county" squirearchy. They are dominated, therefore, by farmers and tradesmen. The rural district councillor brings to the committee valuable first-hand information and knowledge of the parish, sometimes a willingness to work hard for the council, and a local cunning in bargaining which is more than useful to the community. Often these farmers seem reactionary, and their viewpoint does not extend beyond the limit of their own parish; yet it is interesting to watch the same men giving of their time on council business, say, in buying land. They know the land and its value, and know how the mind of the farmer owning the land is working, know the odd and significant details which reveal its true value and the devious conversation necessary to strike a fair bargain.

These councils have greater powers than the parish council, but they seldom represent even a geographic unit. They are paper patterns of government without social basis and with a limited income. But the rate income is not inconsiderable, and the duties imposed on the council cover social services requiring skilled atten-

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tion from sanitary inspectors, medical officers of health, and local architects, as well as administrative officials. Yet the income of any one rural council is insufficient to employ such a staff full-time, and a number of people, some of whom have few qualifications, are employed part-time. The result is unsatisfactory. There is a tendency for one man to make a living by collecting these small posts of £20 or £50 each. He then appears in the parish in one or more of his several functions, none of which he performs well. The full-time clerical staff of the rural councils, and of the urban councils, are often paid very low salaries, although the financial turnover of the council for which they are largely responsible may run into thousands of pounds each year.

Some of the problems facing the district councils cannot be solved within these small units of government. Yet such councils are inordinately jealous of their rights, and resist encroachment on their powers by superior authorities. In these councils, local government is least successful because the form of government has no social basis; urban conditions are not comparable with the urban conditions of the larger towns, nor is the rural district a unit of government except in the regulations setting out the constitution of the council.

Except for these councils, rural local government has proved as effective as that in major urban areas when allowance is made for the complexity of the rural problem. The extension of any service to a rural area is always difficult and generally expensive. The population is scattered and there are many physical difficulties to be overcome; the cost is, therefore, higher per head of the population. If the rural areas have not as yet been

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given services comparable to those of the towns, there are valid reasons for this. A sewerage scheme for a village is prohibitively expensive in relation to the rate income. Farmers will often block any such proposals, but it is hardly to be expected that they should enthusiastically support proposals which will not benefit the farm, and will further imperil their own financial position. The farmhouse is still rated although the land is derated. Practical difficulties of this type have hindered social progress in rural areas.

In spite of these practical and personal difficulties, local government has brought real knowledge and local wisdom to the cause of the village. The small parish council dealing with problems within its range of competency, and within the very severe limits of its powers, provides a valid comment on the working of democracy. In the parish council, discussion is based on ripe experience and sound judgment, without fear of contested elections to follow. Indeed, it is often difficult to find enough people at the election meeting to form a council and the numbers are completed by nominating others not present at the meeting. Yet, as has been shown, at a crisis the people will act vigorously and often rightly because they are acting on their judgment of matters which they understand. The parish is a practical unit for the working of democratic government ; the larger the unit, the more complex and difficult does the practice of democracy become.

County councils, too, have mobilized considerable voluntary effort. The same meticulous care and practical wisdom is apparent in much of the committee work. The progress of the work of the county council and its broadening outlook is one of the more remarkable

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features of recent local government. In one county, for example, it is now a privilege to be on the education committee, and a new member of the county council will expect to wait some years for a vacancy. Yet, but a few years ago, this committee was the Cinderella of the county council.

The success of the county council is largely due to the influence of a few far-seeing and imaginative leaders who represent the best in rural social tradition. They are not the products of party politics or of contested elections ; they are members of the aristocracy of rural life. There are also rural areas with large industrial populations. Here local government has followed the town pattern ; party machinery is efficient and dominant. By means of party programmes they have advanced their political reforms into practice. It is doubtful whether the government of these industrialized county areas to-day is as free from graft and corruption or more progressive than some of the more rural county administrations. Cornwall, for example, is outstanding for its roads, while Devon county is among the foremost of county councils in its reorganization of the schools and its programme of rural housing.

The modern forms and services of local government have brought into rural areas many skilled administrators. This is one of the more important changes in rural life. The progress of the work of the county councils is due in no small measure to the influence of the administrators upon the councillors, their co-operation with the leaders of rural society, and the efficiency of their own efforts. Their responsibility is great. A director of education, for example, must avoid the prejudices of his committee, and present his material so as to make a reasonable

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decision convincing. He is more than an executive for a party in power. He mobilizes and creates his manpower for the committee. On the other hand, he must be prepared to fight an issue many times with his council and afterwards, maybe, with the local managers, whose views have the support of detailed local knowledge. It is easy to plan the senior schools as a scheme of education. It is an achievement to overcome inherent prejudice against schools near towns, against increased rate charges, against anything that appears to uproot the local children. Yet it has happened, and the credit must rest in part with the officials. Similar far-reaching developments have been achieved in other departments. Thus the discreet, anonymous county official is laying the foundations for the new rural England, and this machinery may prove of inestimable value if the economic life of the countryside is reorganized.

This discussion of some social reactions to two examples of the changes in rural life proves nothing ; above all, it would be mistaken to base upon this evidence argument for the " old " order as against the " new," or for the town as against the country. The old order is disappearing ; the " new " has yet to be fashioned. Yet the danger of such argument is real. Urban democracy, for example, is not only an aspiration, it is also a form of machinery for government, and it is often over-valued. It is forgotten that the form was a product of certain passing social conditions, of the factory workshops in large cities where the rootless people, through the training of the Chapel and the organization of the Unions, found in the party machine and the ballot-box a means of readjustment ; it was not unnatural that the means should dominate the

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end. It is useful to redress this over-emphasis by a study of another contemporary working of the same machinery of government, and to become aware of other forms of government fashioned through other associations of peoples.

Sometimes this enthusiasm for the form of democracy has sent propagandists seeking converts into the countryside. The urban organizer argues curiously and deviously in justifying these incursions. At one time he argues as an apostle bringing enlightenment to the poor countryman needing help. At another, he argues that there is no difference between the countryman and the townsman, and that those who assert the contrary are reactionary and have some subtle purpose of their own to serve. Both arguments are futile. There is here no question of high or low values, but of different values, each of which has something to offer to the welfare of the whole.

This would seem so obvious as to need no argument in support. Yet, time and again, the argument has to be countered. In rural life is a social heritage embodying certain values of conduct and association. This heritage is being lost in the changes of contemporary village life. It is important that the best of this heritage should be continued in the future. There is here no pleading for the survival of the village, but for a re-orientation of social thinking that will include the rural and urban experience of this country in its conception. Rural reaction to modern conditions has thrown into relief something of these values in rural life, and the countryman is wise in refusing to abandon hastily the tried social pattern of the village for the unknown relationships of the modern world.

## CHAPTER II

### *Contemporary Ancestors*

"GAFFER" is prominent these days. Responsible daily papers picture him frequently. School children hear of him as a central character in broadcast lessons on village life. He is interviewed and his comments retailed at length. For many people he is the slowly reasoning countryman with a shrewd native wit—a sort of contemporary ancestor.

Gaffer, or the countryman for whom he stands as an old representative, is seldom considered as of political importance. It is too readily assumed that the quicker intelligence of the townsman is more serviceable to the state than the meditative thinking of the labourer. By tradition the countryman is described as "backward." More than a hundred years ago a visitor to the South-West of England wrote that the "people suffer from an overrated estimate of themselves . . . because their early civilization gave them a sense of superiority . . . indeed, in later years, the spirit of improvement has not slumbered more composedly in the Highlands of Scotland than it has in this [South-Western] part of England." This view is still prevalent in spite of the fact that the labourer has shown considerable aptitude in handling machinery; the farmer drives his car and occasionally

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milks his cows by machine with as good skill as the next.

Yet habitudes of thought change very slowly, and though the countryman has made many physical adaptations to modern inventions, some of his modes of thought have changed but little. This is not obvious to the casual visitor. Often these habitudes are seen only as subtle social influences. In Devon, for example, witchcraft is no longer openly practised. The younger generation would scoff at the idea of black magic ; a few of the older people will admit that "'tis no use telling 'bout that—'cos there never weren't no sitch things." For many the subject is taboo, and not to be discussed. Barely fifty years ago magic and religion were interwoven in curious ways, as in the following incantation :

" Flibberty gibberty, flasty flum,  
Calogac, tarada, tara, wagra wum,  
Hooky, marvosky, whatever's the sum,  
High ! Presto ! Money come !

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen ! "

" My father was called an *atheist* by several people here," writes Cecil Torr of Wreyland, " because he scoffed at witchcraft, a thing attested by the word of God." In a certain village in the year 1928 I was not allowed to lecture on " Witchcraft and Black Magic " because of " what it says in the Bible." An old woman died a few years ago in a village less than three miles from a large town, but when she lay ill only the village nurse would visit her ; it was thought, though never spoken, that she was a witch. At the Jubilee bonfire in 1936 one village spontaneously turned the dance into a primitive orgy which is not discussed to-day, and the

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“ story ” has already been transformed into a delightful folk-tale. Even in post-war days white witches have been prosecuted in the police courts.

These incidents are rare, but indicate the existence of ancient habits of thought which are elements in the rural mind. Before we can judge, we must understand the village people, their traditions, their outlook, their interests, and their mode of expression. Perhaps in their way of thought there is something that has been lost in our industrial life.

Visit the village draper—she and her family have lived on that site for more than a hundred years (*i.e.* she was not simply *born in* the village : she is a native of the place), “ her great-grandmother walked in her red cloak all the way to Berry Head to look for her man in the King’s Fleet, the year before Trafalgar, and there were adventurers here once indeed—Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Walter Raleigh would ride together at Compton, only a few miles away.” In this village they point out to you the field near which the belted highwayman robbed the mail ; here they ask for a course on “ The Founders of Empire ”—“ many a lad from here went then.” The retired sailor to-day hoards his silk gown from China, his ivory from India ; and my wife remembers, returning from a village performance, how a seaman’s tale kept awake a bus-load of sleepy “ village players ” until long after midnight, their astonished eyes heavy, their faces shining with grease-paint, he with his ass-head on his knee and Puck asleep on his shoulder. The folk hoard incidents, whimsies, legends—old clothes, old glass, old brass, old chests (of these the Women’s Institutes have organized exhibitions from farm, hall, and cottage), while occasional sales at old “ bartons ” provide loot for tourists’ undoing

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in the antique shops of the towns. Quaint ceremonials persist, bell-ringing and skittle contests are popular, and there is still a little individual craft-work in pottery, lace, and wrought iron.

Time "lasts longer" in the country than in the town—there is time to remember the past, time to live a slow and meditative life in which the trivial becomes full of significance, time for slow traditions to spread, time for pondering over solitary toil. "Nine out of ten will trust the watch in their pockets to keep better time than the sun in the sky" is a countryman's pithy indictment of the townsman's attempt to control "duration," to split up what is essentially a *continuity*. This discipline of the clock may be necessary to industry, but the need for it is not universally admitted in the countryside, and while the folk live probably nearer to the heart of natural reality in consequence, it is difficult to suggest to a village discussion group the validity of the man-made realities of the lecturer's bus time-table, or the regulations of the Board of Education.

It is necessary to remember how recently the villages have been brought into effective contact with the outer world. In Devon, for example, the first pair of wheels was introduced to a North Devon village only during the second half of the eighteenth century and "made a mighty stir about the place." The opening of the railways is almost within living memory; road transport is a contemporary wonder. Even to-day many villages are entirely out of touch with the rest of the world after nightfall during the winter months; and the objections of estate owners have caused others to be three difficult "Devon" miles from their railway station. This isolation creates an essential contrast between the mentality

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of town and country dwellers. In the townsman the urge is first to understand, and then to control the social life of his immediate environment and the forces that condition his life. This social urge is absent in the small isolated village community where the individual is the unit, unaided and unfettered by the economic and commercial *nexus* of the city. To the man living in one circumscribed vicinity, life is of *epical* dimension—the long unfolding and growth of personality, its complex of relationships, its reactions to discipline, desires and disappointments—all this it is possible to view in detail and in whole. In the great cities relations tend to be episodic, kaleidoscopic, as in a cinema film; in the village they continue in an enduring setting, as in a saga. Continuity of place and of time is the keynote, and stoicism, not rebellion, is the admired and characteristic reaction to misfortune—resignation to bad drains as inevitable as resignation to hereditary disease. The country worker is solitary. There is little exchange of wit or idea, indeed he speaks seldom except reminiscently; and his reminiscences are chronicles of events grouped and evolved around place or personality, not a complex of social ideas. This may be a source of great strength—for experience, though limited, is undoubtedly deeply felt.

Picture the funeral of a villager under the moor, and contrast it with the hurried motor hearse and the thronging streets of the cities. The village is quiet, the children in school, no man or woman in street or cottage. The long road winds and climbs up the hill, architrayed by noble trees, mossed, ivied, and ancient; up three miles of steep incline mounts the procession of all the adult men in the village; two and two, heads bent to earth

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and silent, they take turn, four at a time, to push and pull up the simple hand bier, their friend's naked coffin upon it. In a climb lasting more than an hour, with such a task to perform, every man ponders the significance of this loss to their tiny community : reality bites deep.

On the lighter side—pit two individuals to argue opposing points of view, and argument may well disappear in a personal duel, after which the two parties may not speak for a week. There can be no rehearsal the night the poll is declared, for all political parties are represented in the caste of the play, and those whose candidate failed to obtain the seat will not have the spirit to disport themselves until after a decent interval ! Needless to say, this is not due to political zeal but to narrowness of outlook that sees no duel between policies but between “ me and the man opposite.”

Hence, again, we find the older countryman finding his food for thought in his own experience of life rather than in literature or views from the outside world. He joys in the pageantry of life, its domestic incident, and its homely emotion ; the sowing, the harvest, the church, the tones of the bells are his symbols. The village is his universe “ to which come wars and rumours of wars.”

In conversation there is a fairly constant tendency to turn to questions of motive and purpose in life ; to give to discussion a moral bias. The countryman may not be a philosopher, but he is a moralist. His standard of practical morality may not be higher than that of the townsman, but he evinces a greater curiosity concerning the *motives* of man in industry and society, the moral import of new scientific discovery, the lesson to be learnt from literature or from Nature.

The interests of the countryman are comprehensive.

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He is interested in science, in travel, in industrialism, in stories of adventure in so far as these offer new experience and new explorations. He has a keen sense of wonder. Indeed he has time for wonder, time to "stand and stare," to remember the past, to live meditatively. Intellectual casuistry means little to him; he distrusts the sharp wit of the townsman whether he appear as salesman or political agent. A symbol, a phrase or some experience are the material of his thought; these he will resolve in the world of his own experience. Experience is organic and cumulative through him; the past lives in him, a vital lambent influence.

This is seen in rural craftsmen. Traditional skills are handed down in one family. The wheelwright in his craft summarizes the experience of his ancestors in the trade, and his iron-shod modern wheel embodies skill and traditional knowledge of the many elements necessary in producing a wheel for the road. His time chart, as for the farmer, is the flow of the seasons, the rising of the sun, the gamble of the weather; these determine the time and the rate of his working, and Government regulations are, in his view, as unreal as the attempt of Canute to stem the tide. Life is primitive in its rhythm; the nature of causality in life is so obvious as to make it folly to question its validity. The earth is the basis of all life, upon which the rain, the wind, the sun, and man may play their part.

The significance of this is more obvious when contrasted with the town worker's rhythm of thought. Craft has been replaced by mechanized process; his time-chart is planned in an office; his rate of work is determined by the speed of the machine; Government regulations are a vital factor in his man-made world.

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This world is the product of the thought of man ; its cause and controller is predominantly man, whose schemes an earthquake, a flood, a drought, or some " act of God " as the insurance companies term it, may occasionally upset. The majority of its evils are man-made. Causality is created ; it may be comprehended ; it may be controlled.

In a discussion group, therefore, such urban workers as maintain their native independence of mind manifest in their discussion the effects of this process of life. They are alert to question, anxious to " understand " the causality of their social and economic life ; life being man-made should be logical ; its errors are in its illogicity—and their arguments in a study group are attempts to bring into a sequence of ideas their experience, the experience of others, and their ideals. For the townsman causality and the logic of existence are of prime importance.

These things are of less significance for the countryman. Causality is obvious ; the movement of life is so slow, its rhythm so sure, that the logic of life is never questioned. He is not anxious to think consecutively ; he is not concerned with direction, or speed, or quantity. If he stays to think, it is upon the quality of life. He ruminates. He is a " great solitary."

He is in close contact with life. The trees and the wind, the sowing and reaping, the harvest, the church building, the little mounds of earth without any coping stone, the cottage, the bells, the sun—these are his symbols of life. His " idea " of education is identified with the school building ; in the warmth of the inn he knows the comradeship of life. Here is his universe, restricted in space, and something of the quality of life is for him of greater

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reality than the study of systems of ideas. He does not intellectualize his life—he lives it at first hand, and his ideas, though few, are his own, which, after all, is the main thing, and often unattained in the city.

There is something of value for the modern world in this living experience fashioned through long association with the land. Society may ignore this heritage. If it does, it will lose itself in a mirage world of ideas. The reality of the past, as evidenced in the work of the craftsman, and the assurance of a future, are essential to full belief in the high purposes of life. These elements of rural experience have been ignored too frequently by the people of industry, busy with the division of labour and the triumphs of manufactured wealth. Perhaps a temporary divorce of rural and urban experience was necessary if these new worlds were to be exploited. It is apparent now that without some new synthesis neither the town nor the country can create a life of more than utilitarian value.

## CHAPTER III

### *Rural Exodus*

NEARLY two-thirds of the population of Britain live in towns of 50,000 or more inhabitants, while 8,500,000 people of the total estimated population of 45,598,000 live in Greater London. If local government divisions are taken as a basis for calculation, 80 per cent. of the population is recorded as urban and 20 per cent. as rural.

These facts present in broad outline the consequences of the industrial exploitation of this country. The position is not stable, however, and the tendency in recent years has been for newer industries to be located near the existing centres of large population, with the consequent growth in the population of towns, particularly in the Midlands and outer London.

The exodus from the rural areas contributing to this town growth is apparent to the casual observer, and farmers, it is said, "are all hampered by the great difficulty of securing enough men to do their work." (*The Times*, January 27, 1938.) The article from which this sentence is taken proceeds to outline some of the measures necessary to "encourage good men to continue and the better young men to start on farm work." The farmer must take a "more considerate view" of his workmen and model his own life more on that of the tradesman and

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less on that of a "country gentleman"; high wages will possibly reach £2 a week "in the near future, even for day labourers." It is further suggested that in order to increase the worker's "self-esteem and status" it would be better for him "to receive a wage of 37s. a week, and have 6s. deducted for his house, leaving 31s. nett, instead of receiving as at present a wage of 34s., with the standard deduction of 3s. for a cottage, leaving again 31s. nett. This could fairly apply only to tied cottages."

Holidays with pay are suggested, at least a half-day each week, though the "older generation of farm men" would find it a "burden" rather than a "pleasure." A week's holiday would attract the younger men, though there are grave difficulties. That housing conditions should be improved under the Rural Workers' Housing Act (1926) is the final advice of the "country land agent of wide experience" who wrote this article in *The Times*. The views expressed would be considered "radical" in many parishes.

It is important, however, to discover what are the motives attracting the young people to the towns, for it is not only agricultural workers who leave. Any youth will gladly accept an opportunity of escape. In this he is supported by practically the whole village of younger people, the "mobile generation" to whom reference was made in an earlier chapter. The village teacher's attitude summarizes the view of many parents. The height of ambition and the greatest credit to the school is achieved by the "scholarship winner," for he is on the first rung of the educational ladder to the secondary school and the "black-coated" professions. In the secondary school the same objective dominates, and the brightest rural children are encouraged to proceed to the

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training college and the university for training courses as teachers. Once in these institutions, the objective becomes more clearly defined—a teaching post in a major urban area, with London securing the first choice each year of prospective teachers. After London, the large industrial centres claim their share, and as these possibilities fade the less successful students turn to the rural areas.

Within the village school a parallel process is continued. Only one or two children will win a “scholarship”; the best of the others generally want to become clerks in some office or mechanics in some neighbouring works or garage. There are fine gradings of social distinction here. When all have been sifted, those that remain are encouraged to take a job on the land. The only exceptions are the sons of farmers, who often take over their father’s farm, and the very occasional boy who really wants to go on the land under present conditions.

The process of selection has the support of the school teacher, of many leaders in village life (except those of the village “ghetto”), and of most parents. For example, evening schools in rural areas will be found to follow the courses of instruction designed for the towns and urban vocations. The “town-trained” teachers are sometimes blamed for this process of selection because, it is said, they think of the “town” as “better” than the country. After all, they feel isolated from everything which, in their heyday of mental growth and vigour, they loved and revered. (The parson, too, in some instances looks fondly back to his college and to his curacy in the town when he fought nobly against social evil.) Perhaps this identity of the sense of frustration with rural life—which every

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social worker in rural areas must know—tends to support their actions in these things. They also know that in present rural conditions an adequate standard of material, and even of spiritual life, will be impossible for the average boy and girl, and their prospects will be confined by the prevailing wage rate. It is more practicable for the boy to become a teacher than a farmer if he is without means. At least there is a chance in the towns, though the odds against success are enormous. Village conditions are known too intimately, while the town is known only superficially—its lighted and paved streets, indoor water and sanitation, cinemas and shops, money wages and the odd chance of success.

It is argued that these are superficial values, and that with various "perquisites"—not allowed, but often given—a farm labourer's wage of 32s. 6d. is worth about £2. His cottage rent is nominal, his garden provides vegetables, there are rabbits and other sundry gleanings. In the town, on the other hand, wages are nominally higher, but this is more than offset by the higher cost of living and the loss of other, non-money, values which life in the country offers. These and similar arguments are of no avail. Village people are shrewd realists and practical in business. The neon-attractions of the town influence their decisions, but are not the only factors. It is the material poverty of the countryside that constitutes the greatest driving force in this continued exodus from the village. It is not a drift "to the town," but a purposive movement of youth from the bankruptcy and the social poverty of the countryside.

A group of village youths and men listened to a broadcast on design. The broadcaster talked effectively of the beauty of certain types of old houses and denounced

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the bungaloid growths of to-day. The group became restless at this point, but continued silently and with some patience to the end. There was no immediate discussion, and the group leader eventually started the discussion by considering the "design" of the room in which they were meeting. The room was all wrong, but there was no enthusiasm in the discussion; yet it was obvious that something was waiting to be said. A villager took up the discussion and commented that there were no modern houses in the village. This starting-point was, in village tradition, at the circumference of the argument. Another followed with the fact that nearly two miles away two bungalows were being built in an open field. The personal history of the builder and of the owner of the field followed. The interest and animation in the discussion showed that somewhere here was the point of the discussion they wanted to make. Thatched cottages were mentioned with banter and good humour; they were picturesque to every one except those who had to live in them. There was a lull in the discussion. They praised the broadcaster—and then, from these points on the circumference of the argument, by a series of quick comments they focused the whole and ended the discussion. The thing was said. "What 'ee say about Tudor houses and the like be all right, but I'll give all these 'ere cottages, thatch an' all, for one of them there bungalows."

" . . . with water laid on."

"And a ceilin' you don't bust you 'ead on every time you stand upright."

This is the kind of very practical issue that forms the positive attraction of the town for the countryman. These things, or their equivalent, can be had in the village,

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but they are too expensive for the poor man, and often too expensive for the village as a whole to bear. Yet these services are available in some degree even in the poorest homes of the town.

There is little freedom of purchase for the worker in the village. He must spend in the village shop or at the delivery van : year in and year out he must follow the same round of shopping. If he goes to town for shopping or amusement, the bus fares make the visit expensive. The townsman may not in reality have greater, or even as great, economic freedom, but he can spend with greater freedom of choice among the various shops. There is some glamour in evening shopping along brightly lit streets once a week.

This "freedom" of the town appears strangely distorted in some of its aspects. In the amusements of the town, freedom is achieved through anonymity, and, in contrast to the amusements of the village, where every one is too well known, this seems attractive. There are many social activities in every village, and every participant is known not only as a "player," but a person. Part of the amusement derived from village plays is due to the fact that Mrs. X, well known to everybody, is "dressed up" and "acting daft." "I doan't know who be bigger fools, them as goes to act or them as pays to see 'em." This familiarity is both an asset and a liability. It is difficult for the player to overcome this intimacy, for "to see the like of 'im" is for his friends to conjure up memories of every lesser moment in the life of the player. If nothing else can be remembered there is always his childhood. Even the good performance will be praised with a succeeding "but." On the other side of this social balance sheet, such intimacy makes

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communal activity possible ; the village hall becomes a real theatre with living players intimately related to a very living audience.

These same elements are evident in the whist drive, the football and cricket match, and other village amusements. They are indeed social activities as contrasted with the impersonal congregations on the town's football ground or in the cinemas. But it is pleasurable to enjoy a world of gargantuan adventures in a comfortable cinema that obliterates for a moment the burden of personal relationships. To take one's amusements with the same people from childhood, to watch and know them from the school-desk, through the fox-trot to the whist drive, to the Women's Institute, and so to the end is not attractive. This familiarity is the bane of village life, and strikes hard at the adolescent. This, however, is only one aspect of town attraction. There is more variety in town amusements. Although the village has many activities during the winter—indeed it is often difficult to find a "free" evening for any new proposal—yet the subjects are much the same, with the same leaders and the same group in support. The appearance of tutors and organizers for craft-work, music, drama, folk-dancing and lectures has broadened the amusements of the villages considerably, but whatever the type of action, the personnel remains much the same. Even the small market town offers greater choice, and the larger town appears to offer a wide range of amusements as well as a greater choice of friends. Amusements are cheaper in that there is no bus fare to pay, and the townsman can go when he pleases, and not have his movements restricted by a bus time-table. This element of choice given by the shorter working hours and the higher money wages of the town

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becomes magnified in the mind of the village youth beyond all reality.

The individual in the town may follow his "peculiar" amusements, perhaps in the company of other equally "peculiar" people. In the village he cannot deviate from the norm, for the familiar knowledge of the village will undermine his resolve or drive him into seclusion. How often it is possible to find in the village the "mystery" of "A," his private life and his hobby, hidden in his bedroom! A few win through; more leave the village; more conform with the social code, and an old violin or some other relic is the dust of their ambition. They, in turn, become part of the village, enforcing its standards on the new generation.

Part of the attraction of town amusements lies in the professionalism of the performance as compared with the amateurism of the village amusement. Although this evaluation may be basically unsound, it is an important factor. The cinema illustrates this difference most completely. The technique of the film will be as good in the market town as in London, except for variations due to the conditions under which the film is shown. The story is cleverly presented, with **all** the slick finish of a metropolitan industry; even a **third-rate** story will give some enjoyment. Broadcasting has brought into town and country professional amusement which is associated in the minds of the listeners with "towns."

Village and small town drama may serve, not unfairly, as an instance of the type of amusement the village or market town offers. Here plays, usually chosen in a belief that audiences must be made to laugh, are presented with such minimum of skill as only the incorrigible

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amateur can accept. Made, acted, and produced in the village, such entertainment cannot stand as drama ; it must, therefore, gain support by laughter, by exploiting the family connections in the audience, and by the charity it seeks to aid. In spite of improving standards, aided by visiting producers and others, on the whole the amateur village drama remains undramatic and unskilled. One or two brilliant exceptions indicate what real possibilities are inherent in village drama. Amateur drama can contribute to real theatre in rural life, but so bad is "amateur" drama that the words "professional" and "amateur" have become terms of appraisal and condemnation. Moreover, there is a limit to the toleration of the audience, and this is being raised steadily by the cinema. The cinema will destroy bad amateur drama. As the village of to-day will not be satisfied with penny readings as a form of amusement, so, too, will the village play be condemned before the higher critical standards of the audience educated by the cinema and the wireless. The village youth prefers the poor story well told in the cinema in the town to the good story badly acted in the village.

This criticism of village drama is true of most other amusements. The whist drive, the dance, the concert, the lecture, and the social are comparatively inefficient and unsatisfying. Meanwhile broadcasting, the Press, and the cinema are encouraging and developing an awareness of the technique of amusement, and often a new sense of values. If, therefore, rural life is to attract fresh blood, it must be so reorganized as to provide an economic standard of life which can support, financially, good and satisfying amusements. There is much of real potential value in village amusements, but there are no adequate

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facilities and very few opportunities for training the inherent skills. Playing fields, good halls, and trained leaders are necessary unless commercial amusements are to dominate rural and urban life. The ready response in many counties to the leadership of trained music and drama tutors is evidence of what may be achieved.

Another factor in this rural exodus is the inefficiency that characterizes so much of the economic life of the village. It is necessary to live in a village, and to be at the mercy of the local workman, to realize fully what this means. This is due to the general bankruptcy of the village, and any detailed analysis of the many factors underlying these conditions would mean writing in full the recent decline in farming and the subsidiary industries. It can only be noted here that the economy of rural life reflects the personal quality of its people, as has been instanced in Chapter I. The steady decline in agriculture was, in part, due to the farmers themselves, as well as to the interplay of other major factors over which they had no control. The same conditions affected the subsidiary industries. Failure breeds despair, and when there is no hope, even what can be done is left, and available resources are not exploited fully. Thus the blacksmith shows some degree of adaptation and installs a petrol pump, but his heart is not in the business ; he cannot get apprentices. He realizes that he is no longer a necessary craftsman in his community, but a convenience ; he knows, too, he is among the last of his kind. This element of despair is apparent in the village shop and in the garage which cannot compete with the modern equipment of the town.

Another cause of this inefficiency lies in the countryman's time sense, to which reference has been made



*(Photo: Stuart Black, B.A., F.R.P.S.)*

**Power Potentials.**



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previously. "There's plenty of time forrard" has positive value and significance as a contribution to a philosophy of life ; it is, however, a contradiction of the world of business in which "time is money." In this latter sense time is unknown in village life except perhaps at harvest—even then the haste is not to save time, but the crops ; it is a pitting of man's will against the weather. The time sense of village life permeates the "industry" of the village as required to-day. Consequently the job ordered to-day and promised to-morrow is likely to be done "some time." Those living in the village and using village labour accept the fact, but go elsewhere if the work must be done quickly. There is something attractive in this leisureliness ; there is time for conversation and work, for gossip and wastage. Life is an end in itself. On the other hand, this leisureliness may become slackness, the skilled handyman loses his skill, and only by low charges and, in consequence, low standards of living can the local industry survive. The only hope for the ambitious youth is to get away from this atmosphere, for he knows only too well this inner life of the village. He realizes that if he does not leave while his ambition is keen, he, too, will become part of this rural world.

Thus as youth leaves the parish, the percentage of the older age groups in relation to the whole increases. This is particularly true of the village. Parish statistics include the farms which may have young men and women on them, and the distribution among the various age groups will be more evenly spread. The social life of a village, however, is largely determined by the population living within reasonable distance of the centre, and within this group, which excludes many farm families, the older

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age groups are dominant. The ascendancy of the members of this age group, not always of their own seeking, is apparent in the social, religious, and educational activities of the village. Only dances bring the young people together in numbers. These older and ageing people have little belief in new ventures. "Give it three years" is a kindly welcome to the organizer. This element of defeatism is sometimes repeated by the children. A boys' club leader welcomed three new members to the new club in a small market town. It was their first appearance, and the leader talked for a moment or two about club duties. One boy, aged eleven, looked up at the leader and commented, "That won't work here, mister." This spirit often achieves its end, and many a keen parson and schoolmaster, having struggled desperately against this attitude, is driven to live alone and independent of village life. Nothing succeeds like failure in the countryside.

This group shows enormous powers of resistance to new ideas and programmes. They will make superficial adaptation to meet a new situation ; they will sally forth, forage here and there, establish a new encampment, but always with their base well stocked against retreat. This is apparent among farmers. They will modify their methods to meet a new situation, and if times are good will spend money on a car, wireless, amusements, clothes, and other luxuries. If farm returns decrease, they will entrench as readily within their own means, managing with a minimum cash turnover. Thus the farmer survives against odds which would have destroyed any other industry. He is able to do so because his basic standard of life is low in terms of modern material comforts. This is also true of most older people ; the small cash

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income on which the older people are content to live is amazing to the younger generation.

This, however, is not the world of youth ; nor is the young man prepared to accept either the standards or the dominance of this older group. He belongs to a new age of new standards which have but recently reached the knowledge of the village with the force of a revelation.

The movement from the village to the town, then, is a purposive quest for a higher standard of material comforts and the "freedom" that shorter working hours and higher money wages make possible. There is, it is believed, some chance of achieving these things in the town, and there is an odd chance of success for the ambitious. However illusory such dreams may be, there is the certainty that there is no such hope in the village. Indeed, the country youth is less illusioned by the neon-attractions of the town than disillusioned by the decadence of the village. The prime factor driving the young people from the village is the social and economic bankruptcy of rural life.

This exodus is tragic in its consequences. The countryside is further impoverished by their leaving. Many of them will merge with the thousand others in the street, handicapped often by language and tradition in the struggle to achieve their end in the towns. Many will accept the routine of town life, and those rural values against which they rebelled will seem of some significance in contrast with the tenemented life they now lead. Some few will make good : a few will return to the village and join the older group.

No attempt has been made in this chapter to describe fully the various and complex causes of rural depopula-

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tion. Many are well known, and recent legislation has attempted to counter some of these. The present instances, however, show that no piecemeal legislation will alter the attitude of mind of the young people who are leaving the village. This will change only as there is reason to believe that a young man may hope by diligence and work to achieve his future in the country, and enjoy those social amenities which are the right of the twentieth-century worker.

At the same time it should be noted that much is being done to amend and reconstruct rural life, and before proceeding further it is important to evaluate the trends of the social efforts now being organized.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Trends of Rural Development*

It has already been noted that many of the reforms propounded for the countryside are limited in effect because they have but the minimum connection with contemporary and contiguous efforts. It has been argued further, that until a new economic base is provided for rural society, these official social efforts will be mainly ameliorative in character. These criticisms are equally valid when applied to the work of the various local voluntary and statutory bodies whose work in general is instanced in the examples selected for comment in this chapter.

The separate approach of the various voluntary organizations, for example, encourages a form of social competition which tends to lower the quality of the work and to militate against the co-operative use of common resources. The Rural Community Council is a device of the National Council of Social Service to achieve some pooling of resources within a county it is true, and a good secretary of such a council has sometimes achieved a remarkable success in establishing effective working relationships, but these instances are exceptional ; the general tendency is for the national voluntary organization, through its county association, to look with some

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misgiving upon any effort of another voluntary body, even if the latter claims only to help through co-ordination. The anxiety of the national and local bodies to preserve their identity and independence is easily understood ; voluntary bodies need membership, and local branches need strong local loyalties, for without these the work in which they are interested cannot develop. Their existence is indeed often precarious, depending on fees and subscriptions ; to maintain these, and in some cases to secure government aid, voluntary bodies must state their case in terms of income and membership. There is sometimes a fear that " credits " for these will be lost if other agencies work in the field. More frequently the same activity is counted in reports of different organizations, and a drama class, for example, may appear as a " credit " in several organizations, each of which had but a remote connection with the original class. The appearance of any new organization is therefore a matter of some concern, for already competition is intense in the village. A new organization will find it difficult to find a " free " night in the hall, and equally difficult to discover a possible member in the village who has not already several " memberships " to finance. The Church, the Chapel, the Women's Institute, the British Legion, the District Nursing Association, the Men's Club, Church Guilds, the Buffaloes, and sports associations will be found in most villages, each intent on securing membership and subscriptions.

This multiplicity of social groups might be considered a sign of a healthy life, but the truth of such a generalization will depend upon the quality of the work of these associations and the reality of their voluntary nature. It will be readily understood from what has been written

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previously that voluntary associations as understood in the town are not easily attained in the village. Many branches of the Women's Institutes are almost wholly dependent upon the "President" for their existence. Other organizations are too often the work of an itinerant organizer who leaves the group to languish from visit to visit—the increasing number of the peripatetic organizers is a sign of the times in rural areas, and those concerned with rural affairs find that considerable time is absorbed in meeting these rural "missionaries," explaining the local situation, describing previous experiences, and discussing possible helpers.

However, the appointment of these organizers is of importance as representing an attempt by the various voluntary bodies to raise the quality of the work in the county area. The Workers' Educational Association, for example, financed by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees, made three such appointments some ten years ago in Yorkshire, Bedfordshire, and Devon. These "tutor-organizers" were expected to live in the rural area, and to foster the aims and objects of the parent body. The men appointed were expected to hold high academic qualifications and to be experienced tutors.

Now, the W.E.A. is a town organization manned by townspeople; its officers are mainly urban workers trained in urban classes organized by the movement. It is readily acknowledged that the W.E.A. has made a permanent contribution to adult education, and in the tutorial class has devised a form of education for adults which combines the best academic tradition of the universities with the rich experience of the intelligent urban workers. In the best of these tutorials a high standard of study was, and is, maintained.

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When the parent body sent its pioneer tutors into the rural areas, it naturally regarded the work of these first tutors as primarily concerned with extending the tutorial classes ; it was expected that rural people would attain a similar form and standard of education to that obtaining in the towns. There was a real danger that the resident tutors of the movement should be expected to " find " tutorial classes instead of studying the rural problem to discover a form of teaching as indigenous to the area as the tutorial class was to the town.

In ten years this position has changed somewhat, and the W.E.A. has modified its policy without sacrificing the main position. It has not solved the problem of quality, however. It still views any form of work other than specific tutorial teaching as being lower in standard, and in this attitude it is supported by many officials of various education departments. Quality is too readily identified with the form of an activity, especially if that form bears the impress of classic university teaching.

The appointment of the tutor-organizer, later supported by substantial grants-in-aid by the universities and the Board of Education, was, however, a major development. Thus the voluntary and statutory authorities combined now to make it possible for each university institution to appoint two full-time resident tutors of high academic qualifications living in the rural areas. Such tutors co-operating with part-time and voluntary workers can do much to influence the direction of adult education, to interest local statutory and voluntary bodies, and to raise the real standards of adult education. The basis of voluntary endeavour is the unpaid and part-time voluntary worker, and active co-operation by the resident tutor with these people will lead to the raising

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of the standard of skills of the leaders, and so, also, the standard of work in the group.

The principle of the appointment of resident tutors is being extended. The University Colleges of Hull and of Exeter and certain local authorities provide full-time drama tutors. The University College of Exeter maintains a full-time music tutor for orchestral groups. Certain national organizations maintain national advisers covering enormous distances annually in an attempt to achieve similar purposes, though it is doubtful whether these appointments can give the detailed and consecutive help needed by the voluntary leaders in a rural area.

While the principle of resident tutor or producer has been accepted in general, only in the field of adult education are the appointments likely to attract the best type of person required. In the field of drama and music, for example, appointments are few in number, and the conditions of work are precarious. The problem is further complicated in that there is no body giving the adequate social and academic training necessary for this work. The London stage dominates the training of most of the academies of drama, while group music teaching is scarcely considered seriously as a method, and still less as a vocation, in music schools. Such appointments as have been made, however, illustrate abundantly that the cultural life of the community can be stimulated and guided into channels of real social activity. The "resident tutor" is likely to be a permanent feature of a reconstructed rural area.

If the voluntary bodies are improving the quality of their work, it is still pertinent to inquire if they are aiding rural reconstruction. It may be argued that in spite of the tentative and, in comparison with pre-war England,

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radical purposes of these organizations, the total effect only ameliorates the conditions of life for the present population. Until fresh hope and purpose is brought into the countryside, all these attempts must be ineffective ; such radical change will come only through repopulation stimulated by economic reorganization. It is not enough to save farming from bankruptcy ; the new industries of the area must be such as to maintain a standard of life which a citizen of to-day rightly expects. Present social endeavour, continues this argument, merely serves the people who would stay in the area under present conditions in any case, and does not attract new people or hold the young. At the same time, these social programmes are accepted in lieu of a real solution, and they are thus reactionary in effect. As this argument challenges all efforts directed towards the improvement of the rural areas, it is necessary to examine the matter further.

When Griffiths pioneered in Wales with adult education, he, too, was challenged in a similar manner. People were fearful that his teaching might have social consequences. He replied by saying that he sought to produce "Christians, not gentlemen." The same question is put to representatives of the Workers' Educational Association, and it has often been suggested that it would be advisable to omit the word "Workers" from the title. It is to the credit of the movement that it has not succumbed to these blandishments, but has continued to offer opportunities for discussion under expert guidance, and to equip many of its members to undertake some local responsibility for government. The W.E.A., however, does not promote action as a corporate body, and is not therefore a revolutionary movement. Its effectiveness is

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exercised indirectly through its members and not directly as a corporate body.

The Women's Institute movement has very different social purposes, and may be examined from this point of view as a representative rural organization. The local Institute is concerned with "brightening the lives of the women in the village." It follows the traditional methods of village organization. The movement arranges monthly meetings, day schools, and training courses in domestic affairs. A typical W.I. meeting will bring together a group of women representatives of the village in a way no other organization will do. It really is composed of village women. Whereas the W.E.A. is selective, and is concerned that its members shall be workers, the W.I. has no such concern. Its appeal is general, and its organization so much part of the social hierarchy of the village that it has little difficulty in getting members. It makes the minimum demands. A monthly meeting, a short talk, a shorter agenda, a tea, and perhaps a competition are the usual elements of the W.I. programme. Yet the movement has undoubtedly provided a new interest in the lives of many women and mobilized these, the most reticent of the rural population, into a movement. It has done something towards revealing and directing the talents of the women. It has brought them from the kitchen into the village, and if it is sometimes irritating to hear their insistent emphasis on the "women only" attitude, it should be recognized that this was a necessary first step. Moreover, the leaders of the movement are anxious to encourage the rank and file of the members to take office and to undertake the duties of committee member. Reference has been made previously to the difficulty of any local person's becoming

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a leader in the village. What is true of the village as a whole is much more true of the women in the village. (The women were the bitterest opponents of such development.) It was, and still is, a slow and difficult process to overcome these prejudices. When, therefore, the townsman states that the W.I.'s are in the hands of a few "ladies," he is right in his description but totally wrong in his implication, for he proceeds to argue that the W.I. movement is therefore in the control of the Conservative party. Now, at election times, every member knows the views of the president, and, it should be noted, of every other member. It is quite likely that the president, outside her official duties as president, will endeavour to persuade others to vote the same way. The average member will willingly and graciously consent to do so and then proceed to vote as she thinks fit. If, as is usually the case, she votes for the same party as the president, it is because of many other factors of which the president is but one element, though she is a symbol of the whole circumstance.

In some directions the W.I. has done much towards progressive action. It is not to be expected that this or any other rural movement will ever be radical. Radicalism has left the countryside because the radicals have migrated; their independence of thought, their private ambitions, and their energy carried them to other areas with better prospects. The Women's Institute is a post-war manifestation of the social life of the village led by the people who in pre-war years would have been expected to "run" the village. Starting as an emergency movement to increase food production, these Institutes have become an educational movement of some importance; within the limits of the rural outlook, the

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movement has been progressive. They are now a factor which county councils and even government departments must treat with respect. The Federation of Women's Institutes has considerable potential powers, and of this the propagandist is rightly nervous. Under normal conditions the movement will remain progressive at its own rate of progress ; in times of crisis it might easily become reactionary.

The power of the movement lies not in the numbers of its rank and file membership, but in its leaders whose personal influence coincides with that of the governing group of the rural area. This group includes most county councillors, members of parliament, the " landed gentry," the peers of the realm, and officers of the Crown—such as the sheriff of the county. The power of this group is enormous, and of such effect that a government department will not readily come into conflict with its plans. Because the women leading the Women's Institute movement move in these " County " circles, they, too, can exert influence if the needs arise. Similarly, it is not difficult to imagine the influence being exerted in a reactionary manner in certain circumstances. This technique of influence and government is not new. The Boy Scout organization has been built on the same principle, and the Boys' Club movement is following the same method.

The limitation of the method is that the direction and the rate of progress is restricted to the outlook of comparatively few. It is, however, a mistake to assume that this outlook is always reactionary and opposed to the interests of the people. On the other hand, the views of the group will not be radical. It may be expected, for example, that the Women's Institutes will offer domestic

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science lessons on cooking cheap joints and spending the weekly budget of 30s. most effectively. They will struggle hard to encourage District Nursing Associations, and they will attack the occasional Mrs. Gamps that survive. They will not, however, encourage dissatisfaction with the prevailing agricultural wage rate.

Consequently this most powerful movement cannot be expected to do more than give some enjoyment and instruction to the existing rural population and, by its advocacy of improvements in certain rural affairs, prepare the way for later developments that may follow rural reorganization.

There are many other urban and rural movements scattered throughout the rural areas, but in general their position is not dissimilar to that of the Women's Institutes. Few of them are as effective, and most of them very much less progressive. The British Legion usually includes all types of men and sometimes women; but its programme is not primarily concerned with rural affairs, and if the Legion is to survive it will need to devise a constructive social programme. As yet there is little evidence that this is being done.

The work of the Rural Community Councils has already been mentioned. It is difficult to generalize about this work, because the activities of the Rural Community Councils are so diverse. Moreover, the quality of the work varies greatly from county to county, depending largely upon the ability of the county secretary. The parent body, the National Council of Social Service, has certainly drawn attention to rural conditions and shared in the many efforts towards amelioration during the past ten years. It has endeavoured to establish democratic methods of working in village

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affairs and has rightly focused these around practical issues, such as the provision of village halls or the working of the parish council. The financial resources administered by the parent body through the Rural Community Councils have enabled them to implement their aims by conditioning grants to this end. Here, then, is one body trying to persuade the voluntary bodies to look at the rural people, not as potential members for this or that organization, but as a people to be served and as a people very inadequately serviced in the recent past. It has launched enterprises which have themselves gained support from the area. It has encouraged the raising of standards in drama and music ; it has, in fact, touched on almost every aspect of rural services.

Not unnaturally such an omnibus administration is open to criticism. Over such a wide range of activities, and in such difficult circumstances, it would be surprising if every activity reached a desirable standard. Voluntary organizations complain that their own work is credited to the annual report of their Community Council, with which there is little real connection. The secretaries of the council are not always first class, and the work in the county suffers. It is argued that too much money is spent on overhead expenses, and that this charge is out of proportion to the total budget ; while others complain that no detailed statement of the national balance sheet is available. There are others who criticize the basis of the work of the council as merely joining forces with the reactionaries in national life, in that it offers ameliorative measures only and thus hinders the growth of radical opinion and changes in urban and rural areas.

On the other hand, the policy of the National Council of Social Service is directed towards establishing self-

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governing groups of village people to run this or that activity. Grants are given only if there is evidence of some corporate body representative of the people ready and able to administer the proposed programme of work. It has built up a useful service of advice and information for parish councillors. It has stimulated much voluntary activity and enlisted the active participation of government departments in improving rural conditions.

In spite of this evidence of the work of voluntary bodies, there are those who still maintain that society can only be altered by a radical reorganization which will come through social unrest, poverty, and general unhappiness. Any movement, it is argued, which blunts the edge of poverty or promotes personal satisfaction is strengthening the forces opposed to change. The argument sometimes proceeds to assert that these voluntary bodies are being used "by the Government" for this very purpose. Such an argument is used by the Communists, though it is not confined to them.

There can be no answer to the Communist except to discuss the fundamentals of revolutionary change; it is a contradiction in terms to expect a Communist not to be revolutionary, for the moment he abandons this belief he ceases to be a Communist. There can be no compromise.

This criticism is so general, however, that it is necessary to consider the challenge. Is all this work a modern form of "slumming"? The argument has gained more support these latter months, due to the deterioration of the international situation, and the failure of any scheme to deal adequately with the "special areas" or the agricultural problem. Many people believe earnestly that unless remedial and radical measures are adopted soon,

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the struggle fought in other lands may have its aftermath in this country :

Our thoughts have bodies ; the menacing shapes of our fever

Are precise and alive. For the fears which made us respond  
To the medicine ad. and the brochure of winter cruises

Have become invading battalions ;  
And our faces, the institute face, the chain store, the ruin

Are projecting their greed as the firing squad and the bomb.  
Madrid is the heart. Our moments of tenderness blossom

As the ambulance and the sandbag ;  
Our hours of friendship into a people's army. . . .

We are left alone with our day, and the time is short, and

History to the defeated  
May say Alas but cannot help nor pardon.<sup>1</sup>

The urgency of the present demands an urgent solution. Ameliorative efforts are slow, clumsy, and indirect. "Educate for life," claimed the founders of the Workers' Educational Association. New voices are urging that we must "educate for to-day," and that a workers' movement must educate for peace or citizenship, liberty, working-class control, or whatever may be the particular interest of the promoter. They join, however, in asserting that the present form of workers' education is not immediate enough in purpose, and is only ameliorative in effect.

This is an important point of policy. If it is true that the Workers' Educational Association, the National Council of Social Service and the like, are postponing any radical change in the countryside, then,

<sup>1</sup> Auden, *Spain*, Faber & Faber.

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in view of the bankruptcy of rural life, it is imperative this should be recognized, and that people interested in rural affairs should withdraw their support. If it is true that the work of any one of these is not enough in itself, then there is matter for further consideration.

The issue turns partly on the objectives of the organizing body, and more particularly on the quality of the personnel and their activities. To answer the criticism adequately, a lengthy account of the actual working of these bodies in sample areas would be necessary. The keyword in the argument is "ameliorative." If by this is meant measures which merely soften present discontents, then surely the charge is correct. It may be argued, for example, that the attempt to explain to village people how to live on 30s. a week comes within this category. If, however, the activities of these bodies are creative, and stimulate the imagination and the will towards the building of a better society, then there can be no substance in the criticism. Consequently, if—through the provision of better housing, better village halls, through the broadening of personal experience in W.E.A. classes and in the parish council—some rural people became aware of the present deficiencies and conscious of certain very practical and some visionary ideals, then the so-called ameliorative work is creative. Thus the village play, which in one village is but a sop to the poor, in the next village is of such different quality as to waken a new creative enthusiasm. The exercising of committee rights on the village hall committee may well be the basis of rural democracy. A general theoretical criticism, therefore, fails, but remains a constant challenge to social agencies.

The reorganization of the rural schools now taking

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place is an excellent example of the strength and the weakness of this "ameliorative" process. The local reactions to the new senior schools are interesting to note ; usually there is intense opposition at first : the children have "too far to travel," the children are being "townified," the local school is "good enough," "the rates are going up." Education officers are now familiar with these and many other criticisms. Patiently they meet the local managers and by persuasion and argument the school goes forward. "It's twenty years too late" is the frequent comment of the villager after the school has been working a short time. The new school is not only accepted but welcomed.

Here is a social trend of more than passing interest. What is done now in planning these schools must be the basis of educational work for the next thirty years unless the buildings are to be scrapped.

The theory behind this programme is, of course, that in areas of a scattered population it is prohibitively expensive to provide teaching facilities in terms of the small units of the village school, and that the existing practice of teaching all children over eleven or twelve years of age in one village class with the head teacher limits the scope of education that can be offered. If, therefore, the senior children (aged eleven years or more) are brought to a centrally situated school they can be grouped into reasonably sized classes, and housed in a school adequately equipped and with a well qualified staff. Moreover, this type of school is more likely to attract the better type of teacher than the small village school.

Some county authorities, notably Cambridge, have so planned certain senior schools that they offer facilities

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for social and educational activities for adolescents and adults. This ideal has now been recognized by the Board of Education as a desirable end, and local authorities may build rooms for these purposes in their new senior schools with the usual financial aid from the government. These village "colleges," it is hoped, will act as a focus for the cultural life of the whole community.

The planning of these schools, therefore, is nothing less than an attempt to reconstruct the educational facilities of the area so that rural education may shake free from the urban tradition in education, and use the methods and materials relative to the needs of a rural people. It cannot be noted too often, however, that this does not imply a lower or a higher standard of education, but that different subjects and different materials may more usefully be used as being akin to the experience of the children and the requirements of their post-school life.

In principle, then, it is not likely that these programmes of rebuilding would be criticized as ameliorative. (It is surprising that no one has criticized them as revolutionary.) It may seem ungracious, if not impious, to imply criticism of these proposals, when one knows the careful education of all classes of people, including the members of the Education Committees of the county councils, which has been necessary before the programmes were passed. Yet the keenest advocate of the new senior school is aware of certain problems which are needing attention.

The first problem is the location of the school. The economic future of the countryside is assumed in planning the site of the school, and the increase or decrease of the school population in future years is estimated. The



*(Photo: Stuart Black, B.A., F.R.P.S.)*

A Sign of the Times.



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county is marked into areas to be serviced by the new schools. Then comes the problem of the choice of site. All these processes are considered carefully and with detailed first-hand knowledge of the local conditions. The weakness is in the one element taken for granted—the economic future of the countryside. If the present rural economic conditions remain constant, then the school population will vary but slightly from the present estimates and local variation will mean only comparatively minor adjustments in the number of classrooms and buses required. If, however, the countryside is to be reorganized, any given area may be fully developed in such a way that the school will be the centre of the new population; on the other hand some portion of the area may be depopulated and the land used in a more economic way. Either or both of these eventualities may happen in any school area once national interest is really awakened on rural matters (the experience of American rural economy provides examples of both types) irresponsible as this suggestion may seem in England at the moment.

It is true that the education official can do nothing about such an eventuality; he must rely on the native wisdom and the local knowledge of his committee. The point is that the requisite information is not available because no such inquiry has been made. An industrialist building a plant costing a similar amount would make the necessary inquiries as to the relationship of the proposed factory to its source of materials, labour supply, and the market at home and abroad. Yet each local authority is devising plans for many such educational "plants" on the basis of local knowledge only, and the government is urging authorities to proceed with the building

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of such schools, which will cost some millions, without any steps being taken to supply this essential basis of planned development.

It is not to be expected that the local education authority should organize such a survey as is required. The education official is not competent to undertake such a survey. But such information is surely necessary for the authorities as a whole if they are to invest millions of pounds annually in providing the social machinery for a population which may or may not be on the land in ten years time. Once again it is apparent that the lack of a national land policy and the lack of any adequate regional survey for implementing such policy introduces an element of speculation into the present programmes of the local authorities. The placing of the new senior schools illustrates this point. Some senior schools have been placed in small towns which have ceased to be economic centres for some ten years or more and which, if the present trends of rural economy continue, will be reduced quickly to villages largely subsidized by the county as a whole. Others have been planted on the fringe of large towns on land which will be absorbed by the borough council if the present tendency of town extension continues. . . . The need of a social policy is surely apparent.

It will be answered that to wait for the results of such a survey would delay the building of schools for a generation. This is true, but the validity of the criticism remains. It is the weakness of departmental autonomy, with the Treasury as the only co-ordinating unit. It is an example also of one weakness of county councils; too often there is but the minimum co-ordination among the different heads of departments. One new school

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was built recently, and it was discovered that the "building line" regulations devised by the County Roads Committee had been broken. The latter committee urged that no exceptions should be made, and that the building should be pulled down. The county council, faced with the dilemma either of pulling down an expensive building or demolishing its own rule, decided to break the rule.

Another aspect of the same problem confronts the teachers in these schools. It is assumed that the schools will have a "rural bias," and that the general purpose of the work in the school will not be to duplicate the work of the secondary school, but to provide a good general education that will train elementary skills, and awaken such desirable interests as a rural youth might use in after life. The schools are well equipped and free from the dominance of examinations. Very careful selection of headmasters is being made, and there is keen competition amongst the best teachers for the responsibilities and the opportunities offered by these appointments. The teacher need no longer complain that the ideals of the college days are worthless against the practical difficulties of the classroom. There is thus every possibility that these schools will create a sound, progressive educational training. Yet, unless parallel developments occur in the economic development of the hinterland of the school, the directional purpose of the school will continue to be negated because there is no future for boys and girls in the rural areas. The school will accentuate, therefore, the movement to the towns as its opponents have argued. This is not, perhaps, the concern of the Education Committees nor is it desirable that the school development should wait upon economic

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development. It does illustrate the wastefulness of partial development.

There is a local danger that the authorities will limit the scope of these schools. It is not infrequent to find the modern school well equipped except for minor items which in effect negative the full use of the building. For example, the hall is "equipped" with a stage for dramatic purposes, and is given a raised platform and proscenium curtains. Perhaps it cannot be considered unreasonable that a stage lighting set is not provided; but it is surely false economy not to provide the necessary wiring in the building to carry the load of a lighting set or to provide a few staples for the suspension of side and back curtains and borders. None of these items is expensive, their absence is a constant handicap and they are expensive as later additions. Moreover, it is not infrequently found that the back wall of the stage has a radiator in the middle, or some other projection, in full view of the audience. This type of trivial limitation is all too common.

More important is the need for the fullest use of the buildings as a cultural centre for the area. The form that this idea will take must be worked out in each locality. It is not inconceivable that, with the new buildings creating their own traditions, the old antagonism between schooldays and adolescent activities will disappear. To achieve this, certain additional rooms are required. There are many disadvantages in using the classrooms in the evening. Some of these are very practical, such as the size of the desks for adults, the problem of clearing the room after use, and the responsibility for "breakages." There is the psychological fact that the adolescent, conscious that he has "left" school, will prefer to use the

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*[Photo: Peter Hennessy, A.R.P.S.]*

**A New Senior School.**



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rooms hitherto reserved for "adults only." The details of these requirements have been worked out, and the Director of Education for Cambridgeshire has outlined the aims of these Colleges in some detail. The danger is that the education authority will not build the extra rooms and will not willingly consider the fuller use of the "school." The authority tends to follow a given line of development, and to refuse to deviate from that norm in case fresh objections may be raised and the whole programme hindered. Yet, if the analogy of the school buildings as "plant" is true, it is surely desirable that the invested capital should be utilized as much as is consistent with the efficiency of the plant. To keep the "plant" dormant from 5 p.m. until 8 a.m. the next morning is not sound economics. With very little cost, the building could be used up to 10 or 11 p.m. each evening, and the necessary safeguards of the school's first claims would not be difficult to devise. One school, for example, refused to allow the laboratory to be used for adults working under the direction of an experienced science master. There were, of course, good reasons; but this example illustrates the danger of departmentalism even within the local authority. The possible result of this tendency is that the full impact of the new programme of rural education will be missed, and the school will revert once more to the tradition of being but a process to be completed and left behind as "finished" at fifteen.

The new rural senior school is indicative of a refreshingly new point of view in rural organization. Education is to be planned, not in relation to town requirements or to farming processes, but in relation to rural life. It is true that these schools will be ahead of surrounding

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economic conditions, and that the result may well be an acceleration of the town drift, but a start must be made somewhere. The danger lies in a later reaction. It needs to be stated fairly, however, that rural senior schools are not concerned primarily with supplying farm workers at 30s. a week. Only less and not more education might achieve that end. Nor does "rural bias" in the syllabus mean necessarily a knowledge of milking, thatching, or other rural crafts. Rural knowledge and rural experience will be utilized more fully, but there is little advantage in substituting apples for bricks, plaster for wall-paper, horses for horse-power as teaching material; such inversions make the teaching less, not more interesting, and are not even rural. Rural bias is not a matter of subject content, but of primary teaching purposes. These objectives must be concerned with rural life, with the full enjoyment that may be derived from conscious pleasures, and rural wisdom based on a real knowledge of living things. If a school approaches those objectives it will necessarily use materials, experiences, folk-lore, and facts from rural life: the school may then claim a rural bias. The wider horizon made visible through working and living in such buildings designed for these purposes will create greater discontent, and a greater demand to realize these public benefits as private rights in the homes of the rural workers. The practical application of such purposes, however, is open to very few of the children who are attending these schools—in the practical matters such as sanitation, light, heat, meals, and furniture. Thus again, a major development will be negated by the lack of a general co-ordinated programme of reconstruction.

School reorganization is also significant because it

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represents an attempt to deal with rural areas in terms of grouped populations and not in terms of individual villages. The village and the parish have in the past been regarded as the unit of rural life, grouped only for government purposes into rural districts or for very limited economic purposes such as marketing.

If, then, the rural senior school is to become the focus of the cultural life of the area, the selection of the site of the school becomes a matter of even greater importance. The school must be centred at the economic pivot of the life of the area it serves. Too often the site of a school is influenced mainly by the problem of transport for children, modified by local problems of village rivalry and the difficulty of finding suitable land. As long as these buildings are designed for school purposes only, this policy may be justified. One secondary school has been built at a cross-roads in order to meet these difficulties, but the staff of the school find that the remoteness of the homes of the parents makes any semblance of support for the school very difficult. It is doubtful, therefore, even for school purposes, whether such a policy is wise.

It is necessary, therefore, to determine what will be the economic and social centre of the rural area served by the new school. Such a centre will contain the main shops and the cinemas, and the facilities for general amusement. The youth of the area will go there for these purposes. Unless the school—or the “College”—is located near this centre, then the school will find it difficult to fulfil the wider purposes now conceived as part of the function of the school as the community centre of the area.

The programme of new rural senior schools is a major rural trend of social development involving real creative

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social effort and considerable finance. Other departments of local authorities are devising many large-scale important developments, such as the improvement of roads, the planning of water supplies, the building and reconditioning of rural houses, the creation of advisory service for farmers, and the increase of medical services. Each of the departments concerned has improved the extent and the quality of the rural service for which it is responsible. There is increasing co-operation between the various departments, which is welcome ; but while acknowledging this fact, it is also true that such co-operation is limited to the minimum contact necessary to meet a specific problem, and is not a creative, co-ordinated planning for the future of a people. Roads, for example, are improved, *after* the growth of the traffic load has made the position dangerous for the local ratepayers ; the idea of road planning as a means of opening up the latent resources of a rural area is still very exceptional. Motor transport has brought the rural area into the holiday grounds of the town people : for certain months the narrow lanes become crowded with slowly moving cars and their impatient drivers. There are accidents. Then a corner is straightened here, a bottleneck widened there, or a surface patched ; always a mending of the situation. Only rarely will a county plan and build imaginatively good roads across its fields and moors for transport and holiday traffic. There is little foresight and vision in rural development, as these brief comments on the work of voluntary and statutory authorities has shown.

In such manner the rural life of the countryside is being covered with a vast network of voluntary and statutory services. The machinery for the administration of a rural

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area is being evolved and experience gained in the supply of social services. Sometimes it seems that these things are more than immediate services, and that the future is being planned and created now ; but the facts are rather like the façade of the studio set for the palace of Ruritania—without depth or foundations other than those of its own immediate superstructure.

A major trend in rural affairs is the development of regional administrative units intermediary between the national and the local units of government. The new regional units are established primarily for reasons of better administration or for financial reasons, or because the problems involved can only be solved by regional organization. Each unit has been established for very definite practical purposes, and the extent and the nature of the region will differ, therefore, according to the purpose to be served. The country has been divided into eleven regions for the licensing of public road vehicles ; other regions have been devised for the operation of the Land Drainage Act, the Milk Marketing Board, the B.B.C., the Area Committees for National Fitness, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Central Electricity Board. It would appear that the claims of those who advocated regional government for England in 1919 at a Conference on Devolution were, at last, being realized.

Regionalism, however, is more than a matter of administration. Social and cultural as well as economic factors are important ; the problems of regional development include the maintenance of the best social traditions of the area without sacrificing the advantages of modern technical development and without limiting the general development of the nation as a whole.

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In Wales and Scotland, for example, the regional claim for recognition is more than a matter of planning. There is a primary motive of group feeling which finds expression in nationalist claims. In other rural areas, however, regional group feeling is not easily aroused, nor is it desirable that emotional actions should be stimulated for localized objectives of self-sufficiency. On the other hand, social action needs emotion as a driving force within society, and this the county as a unit often lacks. When, for example, a borough proposes to extend its boundaries to include the rural hinterland, the people of the borough become keen and enthusiastic; but it is difficult to persuade the villagers in the North of the county that the absorption of a village in the South has anything to do with them. The social conscience of a rural people is limited by the parish bounds.

Yet, if rural development is to be achieved, it will be necessary to utilize all the county administrative machinery now being devised for social purposes; it is also apparent from the experience of authorities and of business concerns that regional organization will be necessary. These administrative organizations will need the support of a people vividly aware of the purposes of the work in hand, believing in the future for their achievement. A rural "civic" pride is needed. At the moment such does not exist, except in so far as parish and national pride has always been active. The latter is not an effective focus for regional development, and the village as a unit of social organization is too restricted in scope. A new social focus is therefore needed, embracing the local area—of which the senior school will be a centre—the county and the region.

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Such a local "sense" will contribute to and strengthen the national belief of the people.

The regional social sense has to be created in terms, not of "Wessex," or similar historical groupings, but of a modern rural society. At this moment of need, the medium for this effort is at hand in the regional stations of the B.B.C. which are already contributing to such a group feeling. It is possible, therefore, to examine this factor in relation to the recent rapid growth in the number of "listeners" in the rural areas. For here surely is a medium for promoting, guiding, and accelerating the social activities of the large rural regions of England. Already there is evidence in the regional programmes that this regional function of broadcasting is being acknowledged by the officers in charge of the local stations and by the heads of departments at Broadcasting House, though the story of the growth of this conception of broadcasting follows the usual English tradition.

Regional stations were planned to solve a specific and technical problem, namely, to assure good reception to the majority of the population of the British Isles. This problem, difficult in itself, was further complicated by an international agreement in 1926, which reduced by half the number of wave-lengths previously used by the B.B.C. However, technical improvements and developments made possible the Daventry type of high-power transmitter, erected experimentally in 1927, which could be heard satisfactorily within an eighty-mile region. This was the first experimental regional station to be established.

Further technical developments followed, and nine years later Droitwich, with six times the power of

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Daventry, replaced the early experimental station, and a new "Midland Regional" transmitter was erected at the same place. Now the whole country is covered by the Scottish, Northern Ireland, North, Midland, London, Welsh, and West of England regional stations. Thus regional broadcasting came into existence as an attempt to solve a series of highly complicated technical problems.

The programme radiated from these stations was, and still is, planned as an "alternative programme service" to the National programme broadcast from Droitwich. In the minds of listeners, this means the provision of contrasted programmes, a vaudeville against an orchestral concert, or light music as contrasted with a talk. This view is still dominant in the planning of regional programmes, and the alternative programme planned in London absorbs so much of the regional broadcasting time-table that there is little time of good listening value left for the Regional Director to use.

The claim for regional as distinct from "alternative" programmes became insistent especially in the South-West of England. The West transmitter covered, nominally, an area extending East to Bournemouth, West to the coast of Wales, and South-West to Land's End. The Welsh clamour for programmes in Welsh roused the people of the South-West to demand another station, free from Welsh, giving expression to the rich cultural traditions and reflecting the economic and social problems of the area. The B.B.C. was petitioned successfully by many local civic dignitaries, and the South-West was given its own regional station. The important fact is that, underlying the mixed motivations of these petitions—parochialism, nationalism, general dissatisfaction, and

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personal ambition—was the idea of a regional service ; people were beginning to think of regional broadcasting in relation to the social and economic life of the area. It was easier, however, to state such general objectives than to project them in terms of programme content.

There were many pitfalls and difficulties to be overcome. A first difficulty was the personnel of the regional stations. London is the Mecca of the B.B.C. staff, and in the early days of this development a regional appointment was a form of exile. What scope was there for a progressive man in handling programmes which were mainly " relays " ? Everything emanated from London : everything beyond was provincial.

This point of view has slowly changed, and it can now be claimed that recent appointments to regional stations are well paid and well filled by some of the outstanding men and women in the service of the Corporation. Nevertheless, London still dominates the regions. Too frequently the responsible officers are " strangers " appointed by London to the area, and seldom moving from the studio and offices of the region except along well-marked professional routes. They seldom become the " field officer," learning to know and respect the region they have the privilege to serve. Too often the London programme department commandeers all the best listening hours in the Regional programme. Too often the liaison committees of local people set up by the B.B.C. have little relation to the Regional programme. Langham Place still dominates the ambition of the junior members of the B.B.C. regions. Nevertheless, in spite of these and other difficulties, there is a growing awareness of the opportunity offered through regional broadcasting, and whatever other criticism may be levelled

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at the Corporation, it cannot be accused of ignoring its more general social function. This charge it has accepted and discharged with dignity.

Any criticism of regional broadcasting must acknowledge present progress and should be constructive. As it was not easy to devise regional programmes that would serve the area and not be parochial or of low quality, it was not unnatural that, at the first attempt, the obvious peculiarities of the countryside should be broadcast as suitable programmes. The dialect story, the local effort, or the local comedian were the obvious material—for a townsman in charge of a regional station—to select. Much of this material was popular, though some of the turns failed because the local element had no outstanding interest other than its place of origin. Even its best friend was not amused. One or two stations experimented successfully and exploited wisely the humour, music, and the best personnel of the region. Other broadcast educational programmes were designed to strengthen and extend the existing facilities for further education of the people in the isolated areas.

During this period of development Regional Advisory Councils for Group Listening were established and financed by the B.B.C. These have passed through a certain reorganization, and are now semi-independent bodies with a full-time Education Officer appointed and paid by the Corporation. These Regional Councils are linked to the Central Committee for Group Listening, which in turn has its own staff. Moreover, these committees differ from most of the Advisory Councils of the Corporation in that they have executive powers. As the main talks programmes are radiated from Droitwich for national reception, the terms of reference for

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these committees are restricted to the formation of listening groups in connection with the National Talks. A live Regional Committee will, of course, concern itself with Regional Talks programmes, and through the unofficial and friendly co-operation of the officials of the regional station influence considerably the local talks programme. But this it does outside its terms of reference and without official recognition. Nevertheless, representative people are brought together to consider—among other things—the talks programme of the B.B.C. and its relation to the region. Similarly, there are other committees concerned with music and with religion. Thus the regional station has the means of effective liaison with its area.

Now, it may well be that broadcasting will provide that focus of rural life that was lacking throughout the industrial development of the nineteenth century. Urban life has always been localized, and has always at hand the means of expressing its emotions and thoughts, from the irresponsibility of the soap-box orator and the local pamphlet, to the Press, the pulpit, the organized Union, or the protest march. The very proximity of one person to another stimulates thought and provides opportunity for the organization of opinion.

The isolation of the countryman has been his personal strength and his social weakness: his claims are not readily known and understood. He has not made them known because too frequently he has accepted them without thought. Moreover, he has not been aware of what was happening concurrently beyond the news range of the market gossip, and this is important, because the effectiveness of news lies in its concurrence with immediate issues. The Russian Revolution was danger-

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ous as news, it is almost innocuous as history. Ideas explode contemporaneously, and afterwards only ferment. It is not suggested that broadcasting is to create revolutionary action—its controls are firm. But it may galvanize a rural awareness of development, and restore confidence and aspiration to the large areas at the moment existing by virtue of subsidy and outside controls. It may provide the proximity that matters as the basis of any civilization—the proximity of ideas.

This may be done in part as well through the National as the Regional transmitter—in fact, the entertainment, news, vaudeville, and feature programmes all may add to this rural awakening ; and it is highly probable that some of these services may be better done nationally. There would obviously be no advantage in reading news bulletins regionally from each station ; nor is additional regional gossip of news value. It is futile to provide regional vaudeville from an area really devoid of native variety turns ; such a programme merely lowers the standards of amusement. It is important not to postulate the National programme as a sort of alternative to the Regional, just as the present position is, in turn, unsatisfactory in that it regards the Regional as an alternative to the National. The two programmes are complementary.

It is perhaps not possible at the moment to visualize in any detail what the programme form will be. The local service to farmers is a simple beginning. The specially planned broadcasts for rural listening groups, the Regional Feature Programmes, the plays requiring good dialect in speech, the news and comments on events of social interest, and the "microphone at large," are indicators of what a truly Regional programme may be ;

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the major purpose has yet to be realized. Nor can this be planned at this juncture. The medium is new, and very few people are experienced enough to know its possibilities or its limitations. This new medium in the region is, as yet, in the "entertainment-value" stage only. But in the new attitude seen in recent B.B.C. regional staff appointments, in the disconnected and limited Regional Advisory Councils, in the experimental programmes, in the growing co-operation of the B.B.C. with the statutory and voluntary bodies, in these and other ways the beginning of a new social factor of immense importance for rural areas is apparent.

More exploratory work is needed. Welcome as are the signs of change in the attitude of the B.B.C. towards regional broadcasting, a more radical change is necessary. The B.B.C. needs to establish closer contact with the areas. This does not mean more committees or more power in existing committees. It may mean, in fact, the reverse. If there is, as we believe, a likely development of the rural hinterlands of the country, a keen, detached, yet intimate observation is necessary for accurate reportage. Now, reportage does not mean a mobile recording unit trailing "folk" material or anachronistic paganisms. It means seizing the vital issues of the moment and commenting on, and recreating these in terms understood by the wider audience. For this, it may be necessary to ignore organizations and representatives; it may be necessary to have freedom for accurate if devastating comment—about public architecture, for example, in which matter the B.B.C. has taken a stand. Field officers who also know their studio technique are necessary. They must be free from the exigencies of immediate programme building, free to wander and live in their area until they

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are sufficiently in touch with its people to relate the new medium to the needs and resources of the region. In some ways this has been done successfully by certain B.B.C. officials—the most successful too often end in the labyrinth of Broadcasting House, and their work in the area is ended just as they are able to make a real contribution to its life.

A people does not become a nation until it is conscious of its nationhood. Similarly, if our rural areas are to be rehabilitated with virile people with a reasonable standard of existence, these areas will need and demand responsible expression of their new-found belief. This is the true function of regional broadcasting, the importance of which cannot be over-emphasized, because the growth of the conscious foresight of the people will determine the future development of the area and of the nation. Even within the short period of regional development the programmes from the provinces supply material for the National transmitter. This contribution will increase. Equally in social and economic matters, London may eventually be influenced by provincial experience, and the centripetal forces of government checked. Thus regional development may make its full contribution to national growth. In the Regional station of the British Broadcasting Corporation is a modern medium for this contemporary need.

The alternatives to some such regional development are centralized government with a democratic façade, or the open denial of all pretension to democratic government. Democratic government is most effective in the small group facing a real decision, as, for example, in the parish council or the Russian camp at the North Pole. Subject always to the quality of the personnel

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of the group, in such circumstances democratic principles may work more effectively than any other because sharp and quick decision is possible, and more goodwill and co-operative effort is mobilized in execution of plans. Over large numbers of population, the principles of democracy become increasingly less effective, unless the whole is governed through a network of co-ordinated small groups and regional councils. Without this basis of common counsel, democratic government becomes inefficient and subject to the mass hysteria so easily promoted by the mechanics of modern communication.

Of the many regional administrative units previously listed, the most recent are the Area Committees of the National Fitness Council. Some twenty Area Committees have been set up for promoting the purposes of the Physical Training Act of 1937. These committees are in effect regional councils planning and providing for the development of the fitness of the people. The importance of these committees lies in the fact that the terms of reference and the various governmental regulations under which the committees operate are so broad in conception that the committees may do much to recreate the social and cultural life of their region. There is considerable finance available for implementing the work.

The formation of the National and the Area Committees aroused much criticism. Existing local authorities claimed that their representation should have been definite and more numerous. Physical training instructors, doctors, and others peculiarly interested in the objects of the Physical Training Act urged that they should be members. In addition, there appears to have been manœuvring within government departments for the

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control of the vast expenditure entrusted to the National Fitness Council. The committees have been slow in starting, and by the very nature of their personnel, composed as they are in the main of representatives of various organizations concerned directly or indirectly with physical recreation, they tend to conceive their main function as recommending or considering applications for grant aid. Some Committees within a few months considered, recommended, and received large grants for distribution in their areas without any sense of plan and little sense of responsibility. In this they were aided and abetted by the Central Council, anxious to spend something to show that the Act was in operation.

The present procedure is that applications for grant are received and considered by the Area Committee. These are forwarded with certain recommendations to the Grants Committee in London. Every application must go forward, whether supported or condemned by the local committee. Moreover, the question of the amount of the grant is not determined by the Area Committee but by the Central Grants Committee only. The final decision is sent to the applicant body and the local committee is informed of the decision.

This early period may be regarded hopefully as the initiatory stage. Secretaries and staff have been appointed, and it may be hoped that having spent something, the committees will settle down to planning a long-term policy of development. Finance is available, and a strong committee will soon gain all the executive powers necessary. There is nothing to prevent these committees making a permanent contribution to the social well-being of their area. Already certain committees have started to survey their region by collating

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information concerning the facilities and the special needs.

The method of making the survey varies among the regions, but the effect in all cases is to pool local information and link with the committees many people whose experience is of importance. If this method prove effective, the people of the region may become interested and aware of the new facilities, and, after the initial stage of grant claiming, may be guided to use the facilities available under the Act for building the future well-being of their area.

The potential importance of these committees cannot be overstated, and four reasons may be given in support of this assertion. Firstly, regional machinery is being devised for surveying the needs of an area over a wide field of social activity. Secondly, the committees may implement the resources of the area by recommending grants for a very wide range of activities, which have been described fully elsewhere. Through the Grants Committee, large sums in total are available not only for gymnasia, swimming baths, and sports fields, but for youth or adult centres and other group needs, provided always that physical recreation is an integral part of the programme of the applicant body. Thirdly, capital grants are most valuable in rural areas, even though the locality must contribute at least 25 per cent., and usually much more, of the cost. Finally, the amendments to the 1921 Education Act enable the education authorities to give capital grants and to pay maintenance charges for community centres and to provide the salaries for competently trained leaders in approved schemes. Area Committees, therefore, have an opportunity for planning worthily in their region.

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It will be noted, however, that the main concern of the Area Committees is the provision of capital grant. Maintenance charges, as well as a considerable proportion of the initial capital cost, must be borne either by the promoting voluntary body or the local authority, or by both these bodies jointly. The claim of the local authorities, therefore, for more adequate representation is valid in that they are intimately concerned at all points with the work of the Area Committees. Without the fullest co-operation of the major local authorities, the work of the Area Committees must necessarily be restricted. This fact would seem to have been ignored in the establishment of the committees in the first instance.

Such co-operation must be established ; but this does not mean that the Area Committees should become sub-committees of the major authorities. Already there is a tendency for local authorities to seek financial aid through these committees for charges which they should themselves bear. There is a further danger in that local Area Committees may tend to follow the advice of the local authority too closely. For example, the committees naturally seek information from the local authorities about the needs of the area. Such a procedure is wise, but it is imperative that the evidence submitted by the authority should be examined critically by the Area Committee in the light of the information received from voluntary bodies or any such source. Too often local authorities, and particularly minor authorities, are not concerned with or even cognizant of the real social needs or the new projects within their area, and too frequently, when their attention is drawn to such ventures, they will refuse their support because they fear that some day the schemes may become a rate charge. The relationship be-

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tween the Area Committees and the various local authorities will need to be evolved carefully and slowly if the full import of the ideals embodied in the Physical and Recreative Training Act is to be realized.

The Area Committees must preserve the countryside from ill-considered, ill-designed, and hastily erected buildings. As yet, committees give little time to plans, nor have they any skilled services for advice at their disposal. Plans are submitted with application for grant and are forwarded to the Central Committee, where they are carefully and thoroughly examined by experts. All applications for grants towards playing fields are subject to the examination of the National Playing Fields Association. A similar process is followed with applications for aid towards the provision of facilities for swimming. Thus the minimum technical requirements are satisfied. But this is only the structure of a scheme, and there seems to be no means of safeguarding the building heritage of the future. Unfortunately, one cannot always rely on the local government architect to achieve this; experienced and good architects are too busy to deal with these many minor buildings. Yet a major building programme of public works is being now projected and financed, which may contribute to the architecture of our age, if only imaginative men and women are called to its service. Might not this opportunity provide a creative outlet for the many young and still imaginative architects buried in the offices of their seniors, their dreams laid aside while they draw numberless box dwellings? It might be well worth while to follow the example of the Miners' Welfare Scheme in commissioning architects especially for this work.

The expenditure of this enormous sum of money needs

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far more careful planning than is apparent at the moment. It will be argued, with some justification, that the need is so apparent that planning may be restricted to the building, and to the promotion of organizations associated with the project. There is some truth in this. Yet, even if the total sum to be expended were limited to two million pounds, the need for much forethought is great ; but to this sum must be added the grants given now by various authorities, the grants in the future which may be given, as public opinion is prepared to support if not to force the issue in backward areas, and the local contributions, which will seldom be less than 25 per cent. of the total cost, and may be 75 per cent. or more. Planning is therefore imperative.

In the rural areas the need for the facilities offered is urgent, but the solution is not obvious. Is each village to be aided towards a sports ground or a hall equipped for physical recreation, or, on the basis of the reorganized schools, are villages to be considered in groups, and some form of centralized facilities offered ? Or is a combination of both methods possible ? Are these facilities to be planned on a forecast of rural population density based on the present economic position and its attendant social effects ? In what manner will the movement of industry or the redistribution of the population affect these calculations ? These are major matters of policy, and, as in the case of senior schools, there is no planned economy for a guide. Obviously Area Committees cannot undertake such planning, but they can foresee from their own knowledge which are the areas of decreasing and increasing population. They can observe the few rural areas of immediate development ; they may predict areas likely to develop, and those in which there will

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be no development except through some national planning.

Even with the appalling limitations of our social information, it may still be practicable for committees to encourage the economic development of their area. If a seaside resort applies for a capital grant towards a project which, while serving its own population, will also attract summer visitors, and if the project comes within the purposes of the Act, a grant in aid may contribute to the welfare of the area. Yachting, for example, is still expensive, and beyond the purse of the average holiday-maker. Certain parts of our coastal areas are admirably suited for this "physical recreation"; an inquiry financed by grant aid might start a new local industry, the making of yachts for the man of average means, thus stimulating a valuable form of holiday-making and "recreative physical training"—and, if you will, strengthening the man-power of the merchant service in time of need. There are vast areas in the countryside, as Stapledon and others have well shown, admirably suited for national parks. A Rural Development Committee might well use the grants of the National Council for equipment and building, and, in co-operation with the many other committees concerned, start the first national park in this country. Or, again, industries are moving to rural areas; it may be agreed that they should and can provide their own welfare facilities. Might it not be worth while to encourage such movements of industry by grants that would tempt the employers to make their facilities, and their capital expenditure, available for all? There are other lines of inquiry to be followed; the organization for the adolescent and the necessary facilities for activity are generally lacking in

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rural areas. Here inquiry has begun ; but further inquiry and experience is necessary, and afterwards money will be needed.

The powers of the National Fitness Area Committees may embrace these and other projects. The limitation is not, as yet, financial, but in the personnel of the committees themselves. It is not likely that other people would have done better ; in fact, if the committees had been placed under the control of the local authorities they might have been regimented into supplementing the existing programme of the authorities, or, worse still, merely into carrying out the programme for development which still remains the responsibility of the local authority. As creative planning is needed—and this means the co-operative effort of individuals, voluntary associations, and statutory bodies—it is at least well worth trying a new committee with fresh personnel enthusiastic for physical recreation, limited as they may be in their own experience of government.

This co-operation will not easily be obtained in the rural areas. Rates are increasing annually, and for this school reorganization, teachers' salaries, and roads are criticized as major expenses ; cuts are applied to education first. Local authorities are alarmed at the financial implications of the Act, and as yet are inclined to resist any further commitments. Although they are willing to use the Act to relieve the rates, already many small towns are recording their protest at rate increases. County councillors cannot ignore these protests except at the risk of being rejected at the next election, and so losing the opportunity for future progressive work. Moreover, the very people who benefit most from these reforms are least vocal, and have but few means of voicing their

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opinions. Nor are they convinced that these things are necessary, though they usually become enthusiastic once the project becomes a reality in their area. If, therefore, the Area Committees hope for the further co-operation of the authorities in their area, they will need to create a sympathetic public opinion.

The Area Committees have many years of work ahead, and their appointment may be marked as an important social development in regional organization ; if they fail to realize the opportunity that is theirs, and become merely administrative grant-recommending bodies, their future is limited, and again the rural peoples will remain confirmed in their belief that nothing can affect their life, and that all would be well if they were only " left alone." The chances that these committees will function creatively are slight. They are *ad hoc* bodies with a membership appointed by some authority whose knowledge of the area and its people must be second-hand ; there seems to be no provision for recruitment except within very circumscribed limits. The officers are necessarily inexperienced, and generally " new " to their area. It is to be hoped sincerely that these regional organizations may belie their critics.

Finally, it is important to note the growth of universities in England during the last fifty years. Each region has now a university or a university college, and the growth of a regional responsibility is noticeable in these institutions. The story of the universities in relation to their regions has yet to be written, and although I regard these as the pivot of regional and rural development, there is not space here for a full narrative or even an adequate statement of their claims. Like many other vital English institutions, the modern English universities

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have grown rapidly during the last sixty years, changing in form, developing new purposes, experimenting here, retracting there, tradition struggling with new ideas within the institution—in fact, growing organically. From the technical and science colleges and the extension lectures of the nineteenth century have arisen centres of university learning in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Southampton, Reading, Nottingham, Exeter, and Hull. The older universities have been influenced by these new growths. Support for the new institutions had to be found from among the wealthy citizens, corporations, and local authorities in the area. Thus regional service has always been of importance, for in this way the university could justify its existence to its people and with their finance carry the more traditional and academic activities. Science Departments have developed research relating to the needs of the local industries; much of the academic teaching is related to the training and supply of teachers for the local education authorities; in some colleges agriculture has been considered a matter of academic concern, of research, survey, and experiment. All universities developed extra-mural activities, co-operating with the Workers' Educational Association to provide facilities for further study among adults. The University of London offered its degrees to students unable to attend its lectures in person and, in effect, granted degrees obtainable through correspondence courses. Even Oxford and Cambridge gradually broadened their teaching to include agriculture, engineering and education.

Most of these developments were compromises with existing situations, and only later became a matter of policy. The services of the universities to the region

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were given somewhat grudgingly as a price to be paid for permission to conduct the more normal academic research and teaching associated with the ideal of a university. It was thus that Leeds developed departments of Dyeing, Leather and Brewing, while conducting noteworthy research into Icelandic sagas. Within the universities this position is contested strongly. It is claimed that academic studies are not necessarily directly related to the exigencies of the immediate environment ; that to add the word "regional" to university is a contradiction in terminology ; that local research into economic problems is the concern of others and not of the university ; that the work of the Education Department, however worth-while and important, is not an academic function of the university ; finally it is argued, there are other places and institutions for all these things, but a university is a centre of learning and research which is not immediately responsible to its people for results. On the other hand, there are those who claim that regional responsibility is not inconsistent with the full idea of a university, and that there is little justification for the rapid duplication of centres of learning unless some such function is recognizable ; that the highest objectives of a university will be manifest in service to the region and the nation, as well as in the long-term research and teaching which is the heart of academic life ; that the spiritual life of the university may contribute to and draw inspiration from the cultural and economic life of its area more intimately than has yet been realized in England.

This contest of views is being fought out in each University Senate and Faculty meeting on various very practical issues. At this stage the arguments need but

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be stated and the matter considered further in the last chapter. Meanwhile the regional trend of the universities is of note. Research related to local industries, particularly agriculture and fishing, is being developed increasingly. Direct vocational teaching is now being brought within their influence. Dairymaids and policemen as well as teachers come to the university for training and refresher courses. Southampton University College is assuming responsibility for the technical college work of the city of Southampton. Non-vocational courses for adolescents and adults are increasing in number and in its range of interests; not only the Workers' Educational Association, but the League of Nations Union, Women's Institutes, Townswomen's Guilds, and similar bodies, request and receive training courses for their leaders, advice in planning their educational programme, and direct tuition in their more advanced work. The University of Nottingham, through its extra-mural department, co-operates with a wide range of organizations within its large and densely populated area. Its teaching programme is extensive and impressive, and over a period of years has grown in quality and quantity. The effectiveness of the department is not to be measured in the numbers of its extra-mural students or of its staff alone; its influence extends through these members into Trade Unions and local authority activities; while the staff of the department co-operates with Rural Community Councils and similar organizations covering the rural and urban areas. The Colleges of the University of Wales have identified themselves most effectively with the claims of their region, and their service, directly and indirectly, affects the economic and cultural life of the area. The work in promoting musical

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activity, research into the location of industry, experiments and research in agricultural problems, are recognized as important contributions to a regional need, and also to the nation's. Stapeldon's work on grasslands is quickly gaining the recognition it deserves, and his general thesis of rural development is slowly gaining support. The University Colleges of Hull and Exeter are the latest in this field, and both maintain a considerable full-time "field" staff in addition to the research workers dealing with urgent problems of the industries in their areas. Exeter, through its Rural Extension Scheme, has maintained a field staff consisting of a Director of Music and a Music Tutor, Drama Tutors working under an Honorary Director, a Warden in charge of a Community Centre, and a Club Leader, in addition to the usual extra-mural staff teachers. The three-year experimental period of the scheme is complete, and the University College has accepted the "scheme" as an integral part of the college activities.

But, in general, the universities have not thought out this problem of regional relationships. The exigencies of the moment rather than policy determine their activities. The story is told of one of the younger University Colleges that, when applying for recognition and financial aid as a University College, its representatives were asked by a high dignitary of the Government, "What evidence have you that the people want a University College?" "What do you consider evidence?" "Well," replied the Board's dignitary, "have you any Adult Education classes?" The deputation returned to their region, and with the aid of the Workers' Educational Association "blazed a trail" through the rural area—and eventually secured their recognition.

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The university institutions have thus gained some experience in establishing a vital relationship with their area, though it must be remembered that, while these activities have benefited the institutions in some ways, on the whole each step is contested fiercely by many staff members of these learned institutions. The issue has yet to be resolved.

These, then, are examples of rural trends of more than local importance. The list is not complete, nor is it intended to be so ; the instances chosen are indicative of major developments and might be paralleled by others of equal magnitude. There are important omissions. It is believed, however, that not only do these selected examples illustrate the main trends of rural change and development, but that the problems of social direction and government raised by even a cursory examination of their import are true of the whole. Economic changes have not been described as yet, because any discussion of these issues in detail is necessarily involved and demands the expert knowledge provided in many other books. The social consequences of these changes are equally important, and it is the social structure which is the main concern here. The trends of rural organization indicate that, for the first time, there are in existence the means of establishing a rural life capable of maintaining the social standards rightly demanded by the citizen of to-day, if economic reorganization of rural life is able to provide the necessary financial structure.

## CHAPTER V

### *Notes on Two Devon Parishes*

A RURAL civilization, then, is not possible unless there is reason to believe that a reorganized rural economy would sustain the cost of such development. This is the crucial issue in such an argument. But G. D. H. Cole, writing of Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City, states that "the enterprise of building a new town or suburb has no attraction for the ordinary capitalist, who sees far better prospects of gain in simply running up houses or shops and then leaving it to the public authorities to botch his creations into something better if they are prepared to meet the cost. In this way the builder thrusts off the expenses of civic development on to the public purse ; whereas the promoters of garden cities and garden suburbs have to meet these costs themselves." There are other reasons behind this hesitancy of the owner of capital. Rural development schemes have so often been associated with Utopias, fantastic schemes for living, uneconomic proposals and philanthropic efforts, that business minds regard with suspicion any proposed rural development. More important is the fact that money invested in the land has not offered returns in any way comparable to those offered in urban industries, except on a long-term calculation over one or more centuries.

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Public utility societies may build a garden city here or there, but it is not likely that they will be the means of repopulating the rural areas. Ways and means must be found of financing rural development, either as a national charge or by attracting capital for investment in the rural areas. The former of these alternatives is not a matter of immediate politics, and moreover, the experience of totalitarian states has shown the many difficulties inherent in any state scheme for a rural economy. A proper combination of statutory and voluntary effort is most likely to succeed. Capital will not easily be attracted to the rural areas until there is evidence of a long-term national rural policy devised and guided by permanent central and regional bodies of control. The business man will need some assurance that the present "boom" concern for the countryside will not be sacrificed to urban policies immediately the present international emergency is past. He will need some assurance that the State through its various councils will provide the necessary social services, to which, of course, he must contribute through the usual channels of taxation. He will need evidence of the success or failure of the industries at present located in rural areas. State influence or control in the location of new industries will be necessary.

It is often said that many new lighter industries have been established "in the country"; the phrase is euphemistic rather than accurate. Most of the so-called shifting of industry has consisted of building new factories near the larger markets, but outside the towns with their prohibitive site values. Thus most of these examples will be found "in the country" of the large Midland towns and the outskirts of London. In fact this development

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has merely increased the congestion of the town and urbanized the contiguous rural areas.

In many parts of the country, however, private enterprise has established small factories to process the products of agriculture and, in some instances, to exploit the non-agricultural resources of the area. There are also important "private" experiments in rural development, of which the work of Dartington Hall, Ltd., in Devon, is an outstanding example. An authoritative economic and social examination of these types of rural exploitation is urgently needed. The balance sheets of various companies show one aspect of the "profit and loss" in these developments. The other aspect can only be observed in the social effects of these industries on the life of the countryside.

In the absence of such a survey, brief notes of two parishes must serve to indicate in broadest outline the social effects observable by any person living in the countryside adjacent to these villages. The two parishes are Lapford and Dartington, both of which are in Devon. In the former, the Ambrosia Milk Company have built a small factory for processing milk, and the village, therefore, will serve as an example of industrial development in a rural area. Dartington parish includes the estate developed by Dartington Hall, Ltd.

The parish of Lapford lies some ten miles to the north of the city of Exeter along the main road from Barnstaple to London. The history of Lapford village has little distinction except, perhaps, its association with a famous hunting parson in the last century, and an older association with the De Tracy murderer of Thomas à Becket (his ghost still rides around the church). But

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these legends and old customs have died, and the festival of De Tracy's ride is celebrated with a whist drive and dance. It has always been a farming village, marketing its goods at Chulmleigh or Crediton. Its youth left the village or went on to a farm, for there were no alternatives. The coming of the railway, and later the occasional bus, made local travel practicable, though low agricultural wages did not allow for many bus or rail fares. Nor was the village a place "to come and see"; tourists would pass it as just another village on their way. There was, in fact, nothing abnormal about the story of this village. Yet within a few years new life and hope has been brought to the area by the establishment of a comparatively small factory.

In 1927 the Ambrosia Milk Company established two processing factories in Devon, one of which was at Lapford. From these centres the company was able to cover most of the inland dairy farms of the area. Lapford had the further advantage of a convenient main line railway service with a nightly goods service already operating for the distribution of meat to London and the Midlands. Other technical requirements were available.

There were many local objections to the proposed industry. Some feared that a black, smoky factory would result. Others said that the industry would absorb all farm labour and all the girls in the neighbourhood. And when the owners offered to supply the village with electricity, the offer was refused because "oil lamps were good enough." Some farmers refused to sell their milk because, they said, "I've never sold milk, and butter will always be made on this farm while I'm here."

The factory has affected the local labour market



*[Photo: G. B. Instructional Films, Ltd.]*

**Rural Industries—Yesterday.**



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especially in that it offers some alternative occupation for the girls of the area. In all, however, there are only some ninety employees, of whom forty-seven were born within ten miles of the factory, two or three were born in the South-West and had been to other areas for their training, the rest were "foreigners." The average age of the employees is twenty-nine. Two-thirds are men and the others are girls. The local labour supply, it is important to note, proved adaptable to the new factory conditions, and in particular to the meticulous standard of hygiene required in the work. This is all the more remarkable when the prevailing conditions of hygiene in rural areas, even as practised in dairy-farming, are remembered. Skilled technical help had, of course, to be imported.

The factory has set new standards in local employment. The working day consists of eight and a half hours, there is a half-day holiday each week. The men earn from £2 to £2, 10s. a week, while the girls' average weekly wage is £1, 7s. 6d. In addition, increased rates of pay are given for overtime, which is required in this trade.

The effect of these higher wages on the village is easily seen. A girl will often take home more money than her father who has worked long hours on the farm. The employees have every incentive to maintain the standard of work required in the factory in order to hold a job. Farmers around have in general fulfilled the requirements of the factory buyer more readily than those of the Government inspector because they need and welcome the regular pay-cheque.

Moreover, the "foreigners" come to live in the village. Of the fifty-seven men working in the factory, twenty-

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five are householders, twenty-three lodge with their parents, and seven with village people. Of the women, twenty-five live with parents and seven with villagers. All of these people take some of their increased earnings into the village and thus add to the economic wealth of the group.

New houses have been built in the village for the first time in many years. From all the farms around, 6,000 gallons of milk are collected daily during the summer months and half that quantity during the winter. Farms are now difficult to obtain in the area although the rents have been increased.

Thus this small factory has contributed immediately to the social rehabilitation of the area. Like many other firms, the Ambrosia Milk Company provides certain welfare schemes for its employees, such as a pension fund and a useful social hall. This latter is available for the use of the village, and many new village activities have been started here. There was a village hall in existence; the new activities, therefore, reflect the efforts of the new leadership brought into the village by the location of the factory, and the new social attitude of independence and enjoyment evident in these young people, sure of their work, their leisure, and their future.

This sense of well-being is particularly evident in the young girls. The dowdy and dull dress of the village girl has been replaced by smart clothes, showing the influence of trips to the town and the cinema; the fresh, wholesome assurance of their bearing contrasts most favourably with the demeanour of "the country maid." Youths own their own cycles, motor-bikes, sometimes even an old car, and on their half-day travel afield. Each employee receives a fortnight's holiday with pay,

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and thus a holiday away—practically unknown before this in the village—becomes possible.

These are some of the effects of locating a very small modern industry in a rural area. Now, this firm is in the village for its own reasons, and the company expects to make adequate profit on any capital invested. The officials take an enlightened interest in their employees, but beyond this they are not primarily concerned with schemes of rural development. Nor is this a "show" factory. There are no spectacular buildings, nor has the factory achieved more than a local reputation. In fact, the significance of Lapford—and other such factories built in the rural areas—is that here is a business development involving capital investment in a rural area. Yet the effect of this industry in the village and throughout the area has been immediate and cumulative. The first stages of rehabilitation have been established. The social effectiveness of the business is out of all proportion to the capital invested or the number of people employed. One factory will not solve the problem, but the experience is valuable and important. This experience, embodied in the accounts of many such small firms, needs recording and considering; this record should be supplemented with the social statistics indicating the increased spending power of the population, the increased rateable value of the area, and the new private and public buildings brought into being. To this might be attached a social narrative of these incipient rural communities. Lapford, by such development, has become an area with a future instead of a village with a history.

The Dartington Estate has indeed a history, as the crest of Richard II. embossed in the ceiling of the porch to

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the Hall indicates. Eleven years ago, the Hall stood derelict without a roof; the other buildings were only partly used, and the estate of 2,000 acres was scarcely maintained in habitable condition. The sponsors of this experiment differed from many of their predecessors in rural areas in two respects. In the first place, they endeavoured to develop all the resources of the estate and not merely one aspect of agriculture. Secondly, the major principle underlying all this development was to discover if rural resources, adequately capitalized, efficiently and adequately organized, would yield a reasonable return on the capital invested. This has meant working under normal industrial conditions, selling in the open market, and struggling to survive through ten years of disorganized international trade.

From the beginning it was realized that immediate returns were not to be expected. There were, for example, some two hundred acres of woodland on the estate lying idle. At that time there was no source of information available in this country from which evidence could be obtained as to the best methods of exploiting this asset without impoverishing the woodland. At first the co-operation of neighbouring timber merchants was secured, but eventually it was necessary to send an Englishman, who travelled extensively in England and America, to collect and collate information concerning this industry. It was found necessary to buy other woodland, further afield, if an economic unit for skilled management was to be obtained. During the first ten years, considerable time was required to discover ways and means of developing this most obvious natural asset. This same kind of problem arose in many of the other possible industries which

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*[Photo : G. B. Instructional Films, Ltd.]*

**Rural Industries—To-day.**



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may be located on or near an estate of this kind. Weaving, farming, poultry-breeding, and the many other industries needed research into processes of production, as well as research into marketing. A research unit was, therefore, necessary, partly endowed and partly charged to the various departments concerned. This had to be created by the estate.

Central administration had to be developed, although each department was self-contained as an economic unit and was required to "produce results." Again inter-departmental experience of this kind was lacking. Must the school, for example, buy its food from the estate or go elsewhere? Should the farmer, by right, expect to sell his produce to the school? Must one department give preferential treatment to another, buying and selling within the estate whenever possible?

There were many problems of personnel. If each department was to compete in the open markets and submit for expert scrutiny an annual balance sheet, men of considerable business experience and ability were needed. At the same time, because Dartington represented much more than an economic experiment, there were social values also to be attained. Social vision and business acumen are not readily found in the same person. Yet in a scheme of this magnitude, the quality of the personnel would be reflected in the whole.

Workpeople, too, were necessary. Local unemployment during these ten years of development made a supply available from Totnes and the surrounding villages. Much of this labour was necessarily employed temporarily for the initial building programme. It is now estimated that some six hundred workpeople will be required more permanently. Should these permanent

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workpeople be brought within the estate to live? It has been decided, wisely, to encourage them to live in their own villages and to build only for new labour brought into the area. Should trade-unionism be encouraged? Should wage rates be higher than the prevailing wage rates in the area? It has been argued, for example, that conditions with the Staverton builders, a subsidiary of the estate, are no better than the conditions of employment with outside builders. If this is true, is this as it should be? Should "welfare work" be organized for estate workers, and in what manner? A mere statement of the more obvious problems observable by an outsider is sufficient to indicate the complexity of the project and the necessity for a ten-year investment of capital. One important element in any evaluation of this experiment concerns the amount of capital invested after allowing for necessary losses during a period of experiment, for it is the financial structure of Dartington which is the indicator for future planning and development elsewhere. Whatever may be the social objectives, the validity of Dartington Hall, Ltd., will depend upon the soundness of its finances. Certain activities of the company have shown profits for several years. Others are approaching their first returns. These are crucial matters, and however worth-while may be the immediate social effectiveness of Dartington, its contribution to rural life will be enhanced if the promoters can demonstrate their first thesis that a rural area, properly capitalized, can maintain an adequate standard of life for its people and yield adequate returns on the capital invested.

The shares in Dartington Hall, Ltd., are owned by the Dartington Hall trustees, who have other and separate trust funds, which are available for implementing re-

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search and educational experiment, such as the Dartington Hall co-educational boarding, day, and nursery school, and the arts departments with schools of dance, drama, and music. A rural area is the accepted location for a school whenever possible, and the location of an experimental school is obviously a rational development. Children living within range of the school have such advantages as are available to children near the majority of the public schools. But the school is not an estate school serving estate children only or even mainly. It is an experimental school located on the estate, and any other connection is consequent upon its location and not derived from policy.

The development of the arts of dance, drama, and music in an area as rural as Dartington needs some explanation. At the head of each department are men whose names are of international repute—Kurt Jooss, Michael Chekhov, and Hans Oppenheim. Jooss has established a touring company of professional standard, with a school of training under the direction of Sigurd Leider. Chekhov is aiming to do the same. The policy of the music department is being worked out in the face of many practical difficulties. Each department has very adequate premises and equipment.

But what service does the arts department offer to the area? It is recognized that if the little music-making and the widespread dramatic activity that remains in the countryside is to become of any importance expert tuition and direction is necessary. Where such direction has been available in this country the results have been remarkable. The outstanding village drama groups, such as Chittlehampton, Liverton, and Kelly in Devon, the work of some of the villages working under the

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Rural Music Schools Federation, or with the Council of Music in South Wales, are evidence of the quick response, the improved level of performance, and the release of creative effort focused by competent artistic leadership. The early efforts at Dartington tended to follow this obvious development through drama, music, and mime activities, using the personnel of the estate under skilled leadership. The work of the dance-mime group under Margaret Barr was particularly effective, both with estate workers and in outlying villages. Young people responded to this strenuous creative work more than to any other activity except, perhaps, sport.

There is, however, a limit to the technical proficiency to be attained by people working at other jobs. At the best, the success of the performance depends upon a minimum competence attained by the players in the very limited time available, and any distinction of performance will be due to the spontaneity and freshness of interpretation and a real dramatic sense, which by chance or through native understanding they may contribute. The result is sometimes inspiring; the village group overcomes many technical deficiencies by sheer power of individual or group creative effort. It is seldom that this success can be repeated at will. The initial inspirational effort cannot be summoned again so easily; the defects of technique become apparent then to the audience and less obvious to the group, highly elated by the commendation of friends and critics; and though the latter may advise kindly on the weakness of the second or subsequent performance, the initial success and the plaudits of relations tend to make the players oblivious of their faults or their deficiencies. Their standard of performance is that of their own or neighbouring groups. They

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lack opportunities for seeing and hearing at first hand good plays or music or dance-mime well performed. Only the wireless and the films are available and, useful and effective as these are, they have not as yet the full-bodied inspiration of direct contact.

It is not enough, then, to provide directors and tutors for the arts ; opportunities for experience are necessary. The existence of professional groups working and training in the area is, therefore, essential. The support accorded by the trustees to professional groups is a logical development of one of the main purposes of the Dartington Hall Trustees. The training schools, working in connection with the touring groups, will feed the main and other professional companies. The all-round training thus available should provide a continuous flow of leaders and teachers and producers in the world of the arts. At the moment there is no such training ground for drama and music tutors, and those concerned with such appointments would welcome any proposal to establish a centre where a thorough practical professional training might be combined with the necessary social knowledge required in this work.

As in the development of the economic resources of the estate, the application of this policy takes time to work out. There is the difficulty of personnel. The expert professional will tend to emphasize the importance of touring on the recognized professional stage for the sake of the work and the reputation of the company. This demand is valid, and has to be worked in with the major scheme. There are other very practical problems of making tours available for rural people. These and many other problems cannot be solved quickly if the main objectives are to be obtained.

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For eleven years these social-economic policies have been evolved and slowly translated into practice. There have been deviations and experiment, some of which have been costly in time and money. The main theme has been pushed forward in face of keen competition in depressed markets, and in spite of a native, sullen opposition, which has not hesitated at times to spread the wildest calumnies in a way that is only possible in "County" circles. Officials were sceptical, and the few who were sympathetic had to be wary of expressing direct interest or connection. At times it appeared that the countryside was venomous in its hatred of anything designed to modify the existing order. Nor could these attacks be challenged openly, for country people do not work thus. The channels of private gossip, the long corridors of whisper, the speed of the internal communications existing in a county, have to be experienced to be believed. The decadence of rural society is never more evident than in such instances.

These early reactions are to be expected in any development planned in a rural area, and the symptoms must be recognized and the condition accepted as part of the environment. Rural life tends to become reactionary in its nature as its numbers dwindle and its reserves are sapped. Its first tendency is, therefore, to reject the new and the strange.

If these methods fail, the next process is one of attempted absorption ; to ensure that the new shall become part of the organized whole with as little major distortion as may be necessary. Dartington Hall is in this stage. Authorities are more friendly. The skilled personnel brought into the area by this scheme is being used locally and nationally. Slowly, business relationships are being

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consolidated and social relationships established. The village maintains many of its old ways, but the parish council is now active, and the financial advantages of the development in the parish cannot be overlooked even by the most conservative villager. Dartington Estate activities are now challenging the county in all its economic and cultural life. This statement may be resisted, but the constant reference to Dartington acknowledges that there is a challenge which will have to be answered. The attempt to disparage the activities is sometimes an effort to avoid answering the challenge. But the people of the county are going to Dartington increasingly, and ideas and suggestions are taken away and adapted for local conditions. A close working relationship is being established with the county council and the University College of the South-West, Exeter.

The effect of this development on Dartington village has been immediate. The parish council is a live body with meetings which arouse local interest. The new population has brought new ideas, and the higher wage rates have made money more plentiful. The population has increased threefold, and the estate pays about two-thirds of the parish rate of the new rateable value.

Dartington Hall has reinvigorated a declining rural area, and is now influencing considerably the economic and cultural life of the people in very many ways. There seems reason to believe that a sound economic structure is being built, and if this is shown to be the case, then the same principles applied here might well be applied elsewhere by people willing to invest in long-term projects yielding reasonable interest on capital investment. By such developments large rural areas may be

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restored, and the indigenous culture of a people may modify the dominance of imported amusement.

Such notes as these might be written of other parishes, and possibly of other experiments. A collated account of such developments is a project well worthy of substantial support from trusts interested in exploring ways and means of rebuilding the economic and social life of the rural areas in the British Isles.

## CHAPTER VI

### *" Fresh Woods and Pastures New "*

THIS book has, so far, been concerned mainly with a description of the social conditions which form the context of any proposed reorganization of rural life. Before outlining the nature of this reorganization, it is worth while noting some aspects of the context from which many current proposals of this nature originate, because whenever "the land" is discussed certain habits of thought are manifest, obscuring the real and practical issues. Sometimes these habits are projected as theories for a new life in the country. Compared with the complexities of the modern economic world, for example, country life appears to many townsmen as "simple" and country people as "simple folk"; though, in fact, rural life is anything but simple. The work of a farm labourer demands skill and ingenuity of a highly complex kind; while to be neighbourly in a village demands the discretion of a cabinet minister and the subtlety of a diplomat. But so widely believed is this "simple" view, that "simple" land reforms are proposed and accepted by people who would never be misled if similar direct reforms were proposed for industrial organizations. "Single taxes," "nationalization of land," "small holdings," "land settlements," and the "collectivization of farms" are examples of this belief in simple solutions.

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Sometimes the people in the countryside believe in this simplicity and resist, therefore, any proposal for reform. "Do not worry about us in the isolated country parishes," a clergyman wrote recently, "the more isolated we are, the happier and more self-contained we are. There are certainly less jobs to fill, but enough now that the family of one is the rule. We do not hanker after town life ; in fact, we look upon the townsman as an inferior being to ourselves. We have plenty of amusements after work is over. We have our May-day, rabbiting, dances, concerts, billiard matches, and once a year the Flower Show and Harvest Festival. We are quite as happy and contented as the townsman—so why worry ? "

Another attitude, perhaps the oldest and most widespread of all, romanticizes the country life. This treatment of the subject is popular with general readers, and the daily Press has exploited this fact. Even the more staid weeklies give space to the latest bird arrival, the "flight of the heron," or the "autumnal scene." This romanticism is sometimes turned into a crude pantheism in which the well-being of man is achieved through identity with Nature. "Last summer, I spent hours and hours watching seagulls on the Cornish cliffs, and for weeks on end. Seagulls are extraordinarily responsive to changing weather conditions, and they are in perfect harmony with the ever-changing environment, while to watch seagulls going off singly on their joy flights is to witness individuals (life units) seeking relief in the unadulterated enjoyment of being alive, free from the enervating influences of mass psychology." This form of self-projection is common. The result, however, obscures realities with illusions, undermines any critical

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analysis of the situation, and creates an illusory world to be solved by illusory reforms. Thus romanticism replaces understanding and action is atrophied.

There is a contrasting process of thought, noted previously, which seeks to simplify the problem of economic reorganization through analysis. This type of solution is manifest in various proposals and arguments, one of which tends to debate "Town versus the Country" as an antithesis of ideals. "I am not myself a believer in what has been called an 'agricultural civilization.' I take the view that common sense comes from the country, civilization from the cities." It is not apparent whether "civilization" includes or excludes "common sense." In this type of argument the problem is unduly simplified by the intellectual illusion of dividing the whole problem into two or more parts. Sometimes this is followed by an "either . . . or" method of discussion ; at other times, each part is "reformed"—in discussion—separately ; whereas the separation into two such compartments is unreal and impracticable. There is no antithesis of town and country ; the problem is a whole problem of a whole people, of whom less than 8 per cent. are living on the land at present.

These habitudes are part of the social legacy of our age and must be countered by any new proposals for rural life. A new approach is needed ; perhaps this can be symbolized in these days, as Stapledon suggests, by imagining the rural rebuilder as an engineer. "The engineer is before everything a man of action ; he does things and he creates things. What is more, he does things on the basis of such practical knowledge as is already available ; he is not forever bothering with

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ultimates ; he is concerned with problems that have been predefined with a view to achieving a definite human purpose. . . . I know from my experience, experiments, and trials that when I do certain things I get certain results, and that is quite good enough for me. By that much I am an engineer, for I endeavour to convert into action such knowledge as I possess, and I have culled from all the sciences such knowledge of ultimates as I can lay my hands upon."

There is, at this time, an opportunity for such action. The disruption of our economic structure, partially relieved by the present armaments programme and the restrictions of international trade, provides cause for immediate planning of our resources. Other nations have shown that much can be achieved even within the limitations of the modern international trade blockade in planning and rebuilding the economic and social life of the people. In fact, these very limitations have been utilized to create new social incentives, and though, ultimately, any rebuilding must be dependent upon the restoration of international trade, there is much of immediate need to be done that can be accomplished. There is cause enough for urgency in these things, and though there are major gaps in our knowledge of rural economics, there is enough experience at hand in this and other countries to provide a sound basis for immediate decision.

A whole approach is necessary, including the general relationship of the urban and the rural problems, and co-ordinating the many voluntary and statutory efforts necessary for the establishment of society. Economic and social factors must be comprehended in relation each to the other. To illustrate the nature of the "whole

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view " it will be necessary to describe in outline some of the major economic problems of rural reconstruction. It is impossible to deal with these adequately in the space available, or to describe the controversies which centre around each proposal ; this has been done at length elsewhere by many accredited experts. If, however, an outline of various social and economic problems can be described as a whole—although detail must be omitted in the space of one chapter—it may help to define the main objectives more clearly and to provide a basis for a lay judgment on this matter of national policy.

### I

Any development of the rural areas must be based upon the capacity of the country as a whole, and the rural areas in particular, to finance material standards of life comparable to—perhaps even better than—those prevailing in a well-organized urban community. The belief that the compensatory advantages of rural life will be accepted in lieu of material comforts by people living in the country is disproved. The emigration of some 50,000 people from the countryside in the last two years is evidence enough of the fallacy of this belief.

What evidence, then, is there that a sound economic basis for rural life might be established ? It is usual and convenient to start such a discussion with the subject of agriculture.

Agriculture is a basic industry employing some 1,000,000 people and producing 40 per cent. of the food supplies for the home market. Radical changes are taking place in the production and marketing of agri-

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cultural goods. During the last seven years, the State has taken an increasing financial responsibility, so that within a short space of time this industry, the stronghold of conservative individualism, has become a major State-aided industry, providing goods worth some £250,000,000 each year. Yet during the last ten years 100,000 labourers have left the land, and 1,000,000 fewer acres are under the plough. During the last five years, it is true, agricultural prices have risen from 104 in 1932 to 134 in October 1937, and the minimum wage rates have been increased from 31s. 8d. to 34s. But the farmer, although subsidized by the State, exists very precariously only by reducing his own standard of life and adapting his farming methods to secure a better "price."

It is too early to assess the full effectiveness of recent farm legislation, but it is apparent that the total effect of these proposals will not enable agriculture to contribute, for some time to come, to the cost of rebuilding the rural areas. The problem is complicated, and only one or two of the issues involved can be noted here.

The farmer is primarily concerned with the home market, and here has had to contend with severe and unfair competition from abroad. Indeed, so desperate was the position in 1929 that the English people abandoned their ideology of free trade and gave some "protection" to agriculture. To-day various forms of import control are being tried—tariffs, prohibitions, and quotas—with some diffidence, because each of these measures is likely to provoke international repercussions unfavourable to other aspects of English industry. The restriction of one grade or quality of food, for example,

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does not mean that other grades or qualities will be in greater demand or that the price will be increased. Other regulations of food imports cannot be applied without jeopardizing the relations of the home country with the Empire : others would have certain unfortunate financial repercussions in the home market. Agriculture is a matter of international concern, and whatever is planned for the home market will deal only with aspects of the main situation ; a restoration of international equilibrium in economic and social affairs is a necessary condition of any long-term policy.

In the meantime there is much that can be reorganized in the home market, and the difficulties of international trade control and the fear of imminent war have directed the attention of the English people to this problem. Government action in this matter is directed towards securing a steady and better price for farm goods ; that is, the emphasis is placed on the producer's interests. The price of milk, for example, is increased by one penny a quart, although it is well known that the majority of the people cannot afford milk even at sixpence a quart.

Now, there is obviously an undeveloped home market for precisely those commodities which English agriculture can produce, but to achieve this result a general improvement of wage levels is necessary. Such a rise in the wage levels would increase consumption of certain agricultural goods—milk, fresh fruits, vegetables, and table delicacies processed from farm produce. From 1913 to 1934, for example, the rising wage rates are reflected in a marked increase in the total consumption of these products, though a more detailed analysis shows that one-third of the population is suffering from mal-nutrition.

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The British Medical Association planned a minimum diet (1933) for a family of five. The total cost of this diet was estimated to be 22s. 6d., of which 5s. 8d. was spent on bread, 2s. 6d. on "fresh fruit and vegetables," 5d. on butter, and 2d. on margarine. It will be obvious that if prices rise or wages decline, then the fresh fruit will be "cut" before the bread. In fact, a recent survey by the Industrial Women's Organizations has shown that such a diet could not be got for less than 28s. 6d. in 1937, and in the industrial areas the cost ranged from 29s. 6d. to 30s.

This problem cannot be solved in terms of price adjustments, and at last there are signs of an awakening national concern in this matter. Large sums have been allocated for the development of "physical fitness," and it is being realized that these efforts are restricted in effectiveness unless a simultaneous effort is made to eliminate "malnutrition."

Yet we are curiously reticent and sensitive about this matter. A Medical Officer of Health recently reported to his Rural District Council that many families in the rural areas were suffering from "semi-starvation." This was heartily and flatly denied by the councillors. The officer offered to substantiate his case, but the council accepted his report with the substitution of the word "malnutrition" for "semi-starvation"!

Ideas of "right" and "wrong" feeding, however, are spreading in curious ways—through dog breeding for the race track, pigeon flying, and advertisements. Meanwhile, the development of the science of nutrition has indicated the national consequences of wrong feeding and various methods of approach to the problem of malnutrition. The State has already accepted responsi-

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bility for the feeding of necessitous school children. This growing concern is not yet a matter of national policy ; it must become so in the near future.

The result will be reflected in an increased consumption of the body-building and protective foods ; it is estimated that milk consumption should be increased by 50 per cent., for example. This, then, is a potential market for the English farmer. The problem will not prove easy to solve. Large sections of the community cannot afford these necessities, nor could agriculture, as at present organized, supply the market. It is a matter of international concern for consumer and producer that this market should be stimulated, controlled, and supplied.

English farmers have an initial advantage over foreign competitors in the proximity of this market, especially as the quality of the particular products under discussion depends upon their "freshness." Much of this advantage has been wasted by the farmers, and it is interesting to note that of all the schemes proposed by the Government for improving market conditions, those concerned with the factors of quality and packing have met with the least success. These are the schemes—the National Mark Scheme, for example—which depend on voluntary co-operation of farmers and often have no guaranteed return, though, in fact, the National Mark Scheme has stabilized and increased the price of certain goods. In general, the farmer is still reluctant to enter any voluntary co-operative effort. If he joins a co-operative, he often sells round the corner to gain a penny and sacrifices the co-operative he may have helped to found.

The efforts of the Government to stabilize prices through co-ordinated marketing agencies concerned with primary agricultural products, such as milk, potatoes,

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and bacon pigs, have met with more success. The desperate plight of agriculture in 1929 needed desperate remedies; and thus the farmer reluctantly pushed aside his traditional dislike of Government controls, and joined the various schemes operated under the Agriculture Acts of 1931-33. He often pushed aside his native wit and wisdom as well, and, abandoning all that he knew to be sound farming, followed any practice which might give him a share in the guaranteed price. Such specialization as this involved may be good economics and bad farming for several reasons, as Stapledon has demonstrated, "but chiefly [because such specialization] is apt to ignore the land."

These improved marketing facilities must be welcomed, though with certain misgivings. Moreover, they must be visualized against a background of numerous small markets—of farmers and their wives standing hopefully beside baskets of eggs and butter and flowers, bartering their livestock and arguing in the pub, taking a day to do things which might be done efficiently in very little time without leaving the farm. Against such a background the success of these schemes is then seen to be remarkable, and extraordinarily valuable as a large-scale experiment in devising a new industrial relationship between the individual and the State. In this industry, depending so much on the individual judgment and skill of the personnel, the personal factor is of prime importance. This is the central and unsolved issue in the agricultural situation.

At this point, Government departments become anxious, and writers on agriculture become reticent or are silent concerning this first question of the quality of existing personnel and the recruitment of new

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workers. It is easy and dangerous to generalize about a group of people ; Burke's warning against such general indictments is still valid. Moreover, whatever else may be said, this is true : the 200,000 farmers of England are individuals of character and independence, and with a wide range of skills in dealing with Nature. This last fact perhaps produces a sense of inferiority in critics who could seldom "go and do likewise." Yet conditions in farming have changed, and the fact that of the 1,200,000 people engaged in agriculture in 1934, there were 200,000 farmers and farm managers, and another 170,000 working on their own account—that is, one in seven was working for himself and two-fifths of the agricultural holdings were of less than twenty acres—indicates how little industrial experience has affected agricultural processes. Yet the fact remains that modern conditions need modern methods of farming and a new type of farmer.

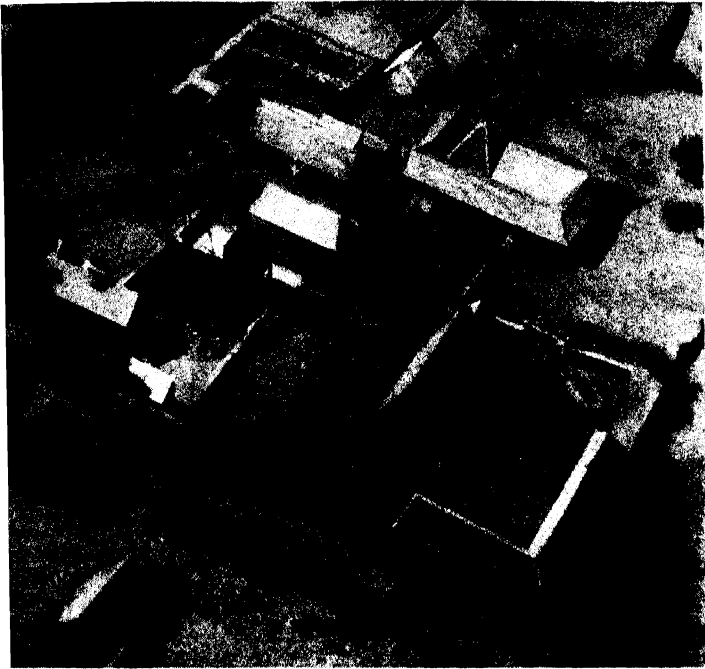
A farm is like a ship, it is said, of which the farmer is the skipper. Much must depend upon his individual judgment, skill, experience, and initiative, and these qualities are the personal inheritance of a farming people and cannot be produced by training. There is some truth in all this, but the simile is anachronistic. The simile of the ship had some meaning when farming was a "domestic" industry operating in a local area. Then the farmer knew by experience, training, and inherited lore the shoals and dangers of the local situation. He was sensitive to local variations. He was, in fact, a skipper. To-day, as even this brief note on the farming situation has shown, agriculture is intimately affected by national and international affairs of which the farmer knows little except as they influence his own position. In desperation, he follows this or that proposal, abandoning

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his experience of farming for the assured price, denying the validity of his own judgment because of the desperate nature of his own position. He is slow to move, suspicious of new things, reactionary towards science and modern inventions. He resists every co-operative endeavour and joins the marketing schemes without conviction or resolve. He has no belief in the future of farming except as a means of support for his family. He uses the bank, instead of a stocking, for his money, but his pass-book records a mass of deals: clothes for the family, a cow, a trip to market are included with all the other incidentals of a farm household. At the end of the year his balance may be "up" or "down"—including expenditure of this kind—and he complains it has been a good or bad year accordingly. True, he will have a shrewd idea of his losses, but this is at best vague and without detail. He lacks equipment, finance, and the personal education necessary for farming in these days.

There are responsible authorities who affirm that the exodus from the land has tended "to concentrate the excellences of the rural population rather than the reverse, and that love of the country has been the dominant factor in retaining those who remained loyal to the country and the country pursuits." Is this really true, or merely a romanticism of rural life? In practice, very few wish to remain on the land under present working conditions; and many who have that feeling for the soil, so essential to good farming, leave the village for the many reasons described previously.

Of course, there are exceptions (and if any farmer happens to read this book, he will show himself to be such—precisely on this account!), but their efforts are frequently nullified by the existence of a low level of



*(Photo: G. B. Instructional Films, Ltd.)*

### Design in the Farm.

(A model illustrating the placing of farm buildings.)



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competitive personnel whose inefficiency threatens the progressive efforts of the exceptions. It has been argued in this book that some of the qualities of the countryman are of highest virtue, and that these qualities have been submerged beneath the veneer of urban customs and urban ways of thought. This loss to society is part of our social poverty. The stability, the poise, and the deep assurance of life so strong in the country, are lost in our modern towns. It is believed that a rebuilding of rural life might restore these qualities of thought and action to their rightful importance in our national life.

But, if we are to rebuild, our context of reform must be understood honestly and discussed openly. To propose farming reorganization without acknowledging the weaknesses of the present personnel is to destroy any hope for the success of reorganization. Because of the virtues of some modern farmers, and because of the success and failure of the efforts of the many exceptions, it is imperative that ways and means be discovered of recruiting the best elements of the population for this industry, driving out the bad farmer, opening the industry to all with the necessary ability. The feeling for the soil needs no special preservation. A man has it or it is dead within him; for many, this sense is simply dormant. In any case, even granted that opportunities were available, only those with this feeling would undertake the responsibility of the farm and its exhausting working conditions. Farming will always remain a branch of the economic system in which motive will be as important as ability. Without this true motive, the new farmer will not work his long hours, take risks, stake his judgment against the vagaries of Nature or tend

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with a mature hand the welfare of his stock. The safe man will continue to follow the industrial routine where accuracy is drafted and planned in the drawing office, honesty is measured and weighed in the laboratory, and decisions are made in the boardroom ; his responses will consist of the minimum required to get him to work, maintain his routine, and pay for his leisure.

The fact that there are non-material factors necessary for good farming is no justification for expecting the farm family to accept low returns and poor living conditions. But the vicious circle has to be broken at some point. With the economic returns at the present level, capital will not be attracted to the farm. Without capital available, the low standard of life will continue and the general level of rural life will remain. In that case the able-bodied youth, with few exceptions, will continue to leave the village.

Perhaps it is true to say the vicious circle must be broken at many points, some of which have been described. The training and recruiting of the farmers, however, is the hard core of these problems ; yet, unless there are other reforms directed towards securing higher and more stable price levels for agricultural goods, the "new" farmer will soon leave the farm, for it is unlikely he will have the staying power of the older type ; the initiative which brought him into farming may take him away. There are, of course, training schemes operative now, and a very limited number of scholarships are available for selected cases ; but there are few after-prospects for applicants without private resources.

The new entrant will need money to finance the farm. The lack of adequate capital is one of the major difficulties of the present landlords and farm tenants.

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Farm buildings are often lacking or inefficient. The farmer with little capital seeks low rents, and the landlord is therefore unable to provide the necessary "plant." Further, not having adequate capital, the farmer tends to farm extensively with the minimum amount of hired labour, instead of capitalizing adequately each acre of ground. It is doubtful, for example, whether the farmer will have enough money even to benefit by the Government schemes for aid in the provision of fertilizers, lime, and basic slag, towards which he must contribute pound for pound, or more. The farmer cannot be blamed wholly for his poverty, and he has shown a certain readiness to adapt his meagre resources to the changing situation. By such means he has survived, but his survival is an increasing national liability.

There are those who advocate state ownership of land as a solution. County councils already own more than 350,000 acres of land for small holdings, and semi-public bodies such as the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the Duchies of Lancaster and of Cornwall, and the Department of Agriculture, own another million acres. Prominent Conservatives have suggested that the Death Duties on land might be paid in kind—but the Treasury will only accept this method of payment if the land can be used for some public purpose.

It is certainly necessary that the State should make financial provision for this industry which has proved incapable of saving itself, providing that the State also establishes a new farm population adequately trained and drawn from the best elements of the nation. Now, to produce this new situation, other developments of national policy will be necessary, such as a food policy and others to be described later. Should not the State

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then benefit from any return on investment created by these developments? The old system of land tenure has broken down and cannot be revived. It is unlikely that private capital will finance long-term policy for land development in which there must be some element of risk. On the other hand, where capital has been invested and the farm has been organized as an industrial unit, there is some evidence that farming can maintain a reasonable return on the capital invested. There is also evidence that the farm labourer will respond to these new conditions, and show no little aptitude for the new mechanical contrivances placed at his disposal. This is not the place to propound a programme in detail. If the general direction is clear, and the conviction strong enough, the experts will evolve ways and means. There can, of course, be no one way or any one method planned in advance with detailed precision, but there is sufficient evidence to enable means to be worked out and a start made in supplementing the schemes now operating.

The problem becomes more acute every year, and any scheme for reorganization is necessarily a matter of long-term planning. Certain proposals can be projected immediately, particularly those directed towards stabilizing the price levels of basic commodities. Unless, however, alongside of these immediate actions, long-term policies are effected, no real change will take place in this industry; there will be merely an adjustment of price levels, and further consolidation of the reactionary farmer at the expense of the progressive farmer, and at an increasing financial cost to the community as a whole. Unfortunately, long-term programmes are not good political battle-grounds, and agricultural reform is not good propaganda. Surely,



*[Photo: G. B. Instructional Films, Ltd.]*

New Days, New Ways.



## "FRESH WOODS AND PASTURES NEW"

however, the ingenuity exercised from 1936 to 1938 in manipulating a rearmament programme, with an enormous long-term debt upon a people a few years previously voting for peace, can be used for other purposes. If the will is there, the method can be devised.

But conviction there must be, and conviction based on realities. We have said that State and private capital will be needed. Capital is speculative, and will demand evidence of the resources available for exploitation and development. The evidence concerning the resources of our land is vague, indeterminate, and private. It is said that our climate is temperate and generally suitable for farming, and our farms have taken shape through centuries of adjustment through experience. Our crops and the processes of farming represent generations of trial and error. There is, however, no scientific assessment of our native resources on any large scale. Any land may be farmed if there is a tenant; other areas may be neglected because they have never previously been farmed. The neglect of English woodlands until very recent times is one example of this ignorance. New techniques make farming possible on lands which a few generations previously were considered unfarmable. Higher standards of life, on the other hand, may throw out of cultivation certain areas, not only because those particular areas can yield comparatively low returns, but because the cost of maintaining a population on that land becomes a financial charge on the community. Schools, police services, poor law relief, road services, and health services have to be maintained once people are allowed to live on the land. There are many rural areas in which the yield from the soil cannot possibly maintain the minimum requirements of modern life, and therefore

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such regions become a general charge. It may well be that, used for other purposes, this land might be utilized profitably and contribute towards the general well-being of the neighbourhood. But who knows? A land survey is necessary.

Again long-term and short-term policies must proceed together. Adequate soil surveys are not carried out quickly, and these are basic to any accurate estimate of our natural resources. At the same time, the experienced agriculturalist can grade the land he sees very quickly into, say, one of four grades, ranging from excellent to derelict farm land: the experience of the locality, the history of the local farm community, and his own judgment will provide a sound evaluation. Marginal cases might be dealt with in more detailed tests. Maps could be made summarizing this evidence. If on these were superimposed other maps showing the density of population, the location of industry, the transport facilities, and all this collated with financial returns illustrating the economic life of the area, some general evaluation might result. This might provide the first "blue print" for a rural society.

Certain material is already available and committed to maps—not all of which are published—compiled for special purposes. What is required is a correlation of these differing aspects of society. This ground plan must be prepared by the geologist, the biologist, the agriculturalist, and the rest in collaboration. The need is immediate; the cost is not prohibitive.

## II

Whatever steps may be taken to reorganize the agricultural industry, even though the results may attract

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capital and labour and produce adequate returns on investment, these alone will not support rural communities. While such developments may be expected to increase the volume of labour employed, it is no longer hoped or believed possible that there will be a major exodus from the towns to farming. Improved methods of farming will mean greater output per farm worker. It has already been postulated that a certain expansion of the home market may be expected, but this will not be such as to represent a considerable increase in man-power. The future development of the countryside does not depend only on agriculture.

A revived agriculture is the basis of any reconstruction, and complementary developments will result in improved local facilities following the development of local trade. The total effect, however, would be merely a revived village community. Much as this is to be welcomed, it is not sufficient.

Processing factories strategically placed in rural centres are indicative of future policy, and the effect of these economic centres has been shown already to be considerable. One small factory will contribute materially to the life of the villages and the area. Rural industries, therefore, are necessary.

Now, many light industries have been established during the last twenty years, generally in outer London and in the Midlands. If these and similar industrial units, as a matter of national urgency, could be drafted into rural areas, and located in strategically planned positions—in part to avoid creating new urban centres and in part to secure uniform distribution of social effects—the main structure of a rural economy would be substantially achieved.

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The development of Trading Estates at Gateshead and in South Wales show that it is possible to induce lighter industries to be located even in a distressed area. But the justification of these Trading Estates is extremely doubtful. It is unlikely that they will make any appreciable contribution to the economic life of the area, and the cost to the State is considerable. The same factories in a rural area would have infinitely greater effect on the economic life of the whole. Labour, from distressed areas if you will, might be imported, and the industry would start with the people hopeful of its future instead of accepting the new factory as an amelioration of a bankrupt society. The psychology of the people is of paramount importance. The revivifying of agriculture is a psychological as well as an economic problem; for that reason new man-power is essential. In rebuilding a rural area, this hopefulness may be consolidated into belief. It is possible to restore some industries to the rural areas. Power is available. Electricity is a mobile force, and is being distributed through the grid system in rural areas, though sometimes the monopoly of the local outlet will need breaking. Transport can be rapidly improved. New roads will be needed leading to the main arterial roads already planned. In some cases adequate rail facilities are available. Besides power, transport, and proximity to substantial markets, the newer industries also need ports for the entry of such materials as they require, and to a lesser extent for the export of their goods. This can be overcome by adequate transport facilities to existing ports and in some cases by the opening of new ports.

At the moment London is the magnet for the new industries because it fulfils all these conditions. The effect



*(Photo: G. B. Instructional Films, Ltd.)*

**Mobile Power.**



## "FRESH WOODS AND PASTURES NEW"

is cumulative, in that the work-people are new resident consumers, and expand the local market and thus attract further industries. The result is an abnormal increase in the population of Greater and Outer London and the impoverishment of many other areas of the country. This is bad national policy from every point of view. On the other hand, a well-planned distribution of these factories would contribute materially to the rebuilding of many parts of the country, a more even distribution of the population, and the spread of the economic wealth of the nation. In this direction lies the only hope of providing a sound economic structure for the rural areas.

It will be argued, of course, that distribution and manufacturing costs will increase perceptibly, that production will decrease in volume, and that the results, therefore, will not be as great as might be expected. This is the usual argument advanced against any form of State regulation of industry. It does not follow that prices will rise; production must be maintained at certain minimum levels in the modern factory if profits are to result. Nor is it likely that investors faced with the alternative of less dividend or the loss of their capital will choose the latter. Nor does it follow that capital will be diverted from these investments as a result of the control of location of the factory. "Scarcity-mongering" is not an argument but a fallacy. Moreover, if this thesis of controlled distribution of industry is sound, there will be actually an increase in the total market, and not, as at present, an increase in a few sections of the country with the impoverishment of the others.

Labour has proved surprisingly mobile during the past ten years, as country areas have known it to be for long

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enough. The subsequent reconstruction of roads, the building of houses and factories, the increase in the distributive services, would not only spread the population more evenly, but also provide for a total increase due to the more even spreading of the national wealth. Rural rebuilding, however, is no panacea for unemployment in the major industries; nor will it solve the problem of the unemployed over fifty years of age. It will provide a future for many of the younger generation and stabilize the economic life of the country over large areas.

If, therefore, the rural location of industry is planned alongside the development of agriculture, the economic foundation of a rural society will be assured. These things are happening to some extent, but more purposive and immediate action is necessary. If only the same purposive energy was manifest in building creatively as is displayed in speeding armament production there would be real hope for the countryside. While rearmament is afoot there will be bounties for this and that expedient. Soon will come the reaction for economy and retrenchment, and the chances are that another period of drift and economic dissipation will follow. Already this clamour is evident in rural areas; already education programmes and health services are being "cut." Unfortunately, it is unlikely that planned rural development will materialize until the country as a whole becomes conscious of its immediate and potential resources. Townsmen still think of the farm as a holiday centre and not as an industry; but even this is an aspect of financial importance which must be considered next.

III

"Discovering England" has proved one of the more popular journalistic efforts of the last few years. A turn of the switch and "England" is broadcast in word and sound. In the summer, the town roads are full of people seeking this "holy grail" of modern England—the countryside. There is something tragic in the very persistence of the quest. Often enough damp grass and gnats, the fire that won't light, the shower during the picnic, the baby in the hidden manure heap, make the visit to the country an ordeal; but the armful of plucked bluebells, dead within a few hours, the bulbs to be planted and die in the garden, are wistful gestures towards an empty enjoyment that has proved elusive again. The belief that we should have enjoyed something we did not, overrides all, and in the autumn the maze of wireless excursions sets all talking of "the picnic" in a haze of romance.

All of this is financially important, as governments are beginning to realize. It is estimated that £150,000,000 is spent by holiday-makers in Great Britain every year. The holiday crowd increases yearly, and each year more of these people travel into the countryside for their amusement. There is the basis of a real industry in this annual exodus. There is also the opportunity for the people of the countryside to make a real contribution to the health and spirit of the nation.

It is scarcely true to say that there is a "holiday industry" in existence, however. At present the holiday-maker is vague and uncertain as to his requirements, and is as willing to try one place as the next. He shows little

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discrimination in his search for a holiday. The producer—whether the landlady in the boarding-house or the farm-wife in the country—regards the holiday-maker as some one who has left all normal values at home, and is therefore to be exploited as much as possible. Local authorities have launched campaigns to advertize the holiday areas, and have spent wildly in an effort to compete with the garish attractions of their rivals. Trees become signposts to “Ye olde Englishe” tea rooms, the farm becomes a Guest House, and fields become caravan slums.

There is much to be done if this potential market is to be developed into an industry. The “landlady” has to be controlled—a formidable task! Local authorities will need to supervise, control, and grade the boarding-houses and hotels, the cottages and the farms, as the motoring organizations have already done in some measure. The real amenities of the area must be saved from exploitation by private and public bodies. And this must be done quickly. As yet our work-people are travel-shy, and do not like venturing into foreign parts. At the moment they move about in our own country, but they are travelling further afield each year. Soon they, too, will join the increasing numbers of travellers abroad, conducted to classified hotels at an all-in cost which is often less expensive than a holiday in England. The goodwill of this major industry must be established now.

It is not enough to urbanize the countryside, to offer the novelty of a village dance or the local cinema; that is not the contribution the rural areas can offer. The coast, with yachting made possible for the working-class budget, fishing, riding, open-air sports and games,

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well-guided walks and climbing, exploration of uplands, intelligent and interesting visits to ancient remains, contact with local industrial processes which the holiday-maker knows only as products "delivered at the door"—these are the resources to be capitalized.

We have not learned how to develop our holiday resources. Stonehenge, for example, is one of many natural centres for a holiday visit, and will serve as an illustration. The visitor willingly pays sixpence to enter the enclosure and view these stones of which he has heard various stories. The State has properly enclosed the land, but having accepted sixpence and opened the turnstile, the State leaves the visitor stranded to his own devices. The stones remain a closed mystery still. If he wishes to know more, he must buy a book and read it and try to relate the facts to the stones. This the holiday-maker seldom does, nor is it to be expected that he should do so. The result is that his visit is not a memorable experience, but a holiday "snapshot" of some very bleak stones.

The use made of the Grand Canyon in New Mexico admirably exemplifies the full development of a natural holiday point. The Canyon itself is exciting, awe-inspiring, and beautiful. There might seem to be nothing to do for the holiday-maker except to preserve the beauty of the various approaches. Tracks, camps, lecturers, charts, are provided, and on the edge of the Canyon stands a shelter in which are a number of binoculars, each focused on the opposite wall of the Canyon. Beneath each pair of glasses is a short note describing the origin and history of the object to be seen. As the spectator moves from one pair of glasses to the next, the Canyon becomes more beautiful and

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more truly exciting as the sides are seen to lay bare the working of primæval forces. Life itself is illumined in the fissures and imprints made visible. The visit to the Canyon becomes an experience of lasting significance.

This is true holiday "service," and we have much to learn from America's development of the "National Parks," which could be applied to National Parks in the British Isles. The alternative process is only too apparent. Each year's delay will make the task of planning these areas more difficult and more expensive as *entrepreneurs* exploit each beauty of the land.

These are good æsthetic reasons for action ; there are also urgent financial reasons why this holiday traffic should be organized as an industry. In this the National Fitness Council might help. The local authorities must take more responsibility. But the major responsibility must emanate from the people in the holiday areas, and thus, again, the central issue is found to be the quality of the personnel in the rural areas and the holiday towns.

It is argued that the holiday season is short, and that the countryman cannot be expected to put much capital into this "sideline" or to give much time to this work. But it is not so much individual as co-operative effort that is required. Many farms, for example, have improved the sanitary and washing conveniences of the house for visitors, and some have made reasonable provision for campers ; the kind of development required lies more within the province of the local authorities or some corporate body set up voluntarily for the purpose. It may be noted here that the "week-end" is not the most economical or effective way of giving a rest to workers, as H. G. Wells argued long ago, and a re-grouping of working days to a ten-day working week

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with a four-day week-end for holiday would aid the holiday industry, the worker, and the employer. The "staggering" of holidays generally is more immediately practicable—fine weather is uncertain enough to be considered as "staggered" now. The effect of a longer holiday period and a more even holiday demand might lower prices in the present "peak" holiday periods and raise prices in the early and late summer, thus meeting some of the holiday caterers' very real difficulties.

There are other factors in the economic life of the countryside which should be considered, though there is no space to do so here. Fishing, for example, is capable of development if, again, a new approach to the problem can be made. The rural hinterlands of the fishing ports are infrequently supplied with fish, while fishermen complain that there is no "price" for the fish they bring to port. This, again, is a complicated matter of capital investment, "rings," marketing facilities, co-operatives, and national policy. The fishermen and the Extension Staff of the University of St. Francis Xavier in Newfoundland, working together, have demonstrated what can be done co-operatively to rebuild the life of a derelict fishing area.

This outline of the economic structure of rural life is based on the evidence of what is happening now in various parts of the British Isles. In some areas the cumulative effect is already apparent, and there is new hope and vitality in those areas. But a general concerted policy is necessary if these trends are to be effective; without such concerted policy and action the cumulative effect will be lost, and the countryside will continue to exist doubtfully in peace times and artificially in times of war. Agriculture can be reorganized to pay higher wages

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if it is properly financed, and if provision is made for the new entrant to this industry. It is not likely, however, that there will be any great increase in the number of people directly employed. The same is true of the fishing industry. The holiday industry is another unexplored source of income. Since these industries alone will not provide sufficient total wealth, modern light industries must be located strategically in the rural areas instead of being concentrated in highly populated areas, as is the general practice. The cumulative effect of these developments would provide a sound, stable economic basis for a rural society.

## IV

It is equally important to discuss the social direction of these efforts. If this reorganized life is to be rural and yet maintain the material standards of modern life, it follows that neither the spreading of the towns into the country nor the swelling of smaller towns into larger centres, is consistent with the simplest statement of the purposes of this reorganization. Our largest towns are admitted to be overlarge and to create many social problems not easily solved. The development of smaller towns as centres of rural life housing the workers "on the land" is advocated by some people, and is therefore a matter for discussion.

Before proceeding further it is possible to agree to a further elimination, namely, of the village. If the largest urban unit should not be duplicated in other centres, nor the small town be converted into a new metropolis, it is equally true that the village, as it has been known to

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exist into our own times, is equally undesirable as a social unit. The small village is expensive in social maintenance costs. The *per capita* charge for the maintenance of social services is necessarily heavy, though this would materially decrease in time as the population in the village or the area increased. It has been shown previously that it is difficult to maintain an attractive social life within the small village community, and that the social unit in rural life is in some areas often focused around the market town or, for some purposes, around the new senior school or “village college.” The large town and the village can, therefore, be eliminated as objectives, though each will have its function in the life of the nation as a whole.

There are those who argue that even if a man works in a rural area there is no reason why he should live there, and that if farming conditions improve it will not be essential that the labourer should live on the farm. The worker in the local processing factory may and sometimes does cycle or bus from the town to his work. The argument would seem to imply that the decentralization of our “light” industries and our population should be visualized around smaller towns, the upper population limit of which might be 50,000 or 60,000 people. These would be the civic centres from which workers would travel if necessary to their work. Presumably some agricultural workers would live in these towns, leaving even fewer people in the country.

There are many arguments in favour of the small civic centre. Many towns of this size are keenly conscious of their civic pride, and can show educational and cultural activities of some importance. The citizens often feel that indeed they are “of no mean city.” With careful

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planning, many rural amenities are preserved, as Welwyn Garden City well illustrates. Yet somehow this is not rural life, but only a semblance of the real living relationship with the things of the countryside that is preserved. Grateful as one must be to see a tree saved, grass-lined sidewalks, pleasant houses discreetly hidden from the road, it seems but a mirage; and the words "amenities preserved" and other estate agent terms seem more truly applicable. It is the sylvan scene of the eighteenth century in modern fashion.

Prejudice is no argument, and it may be that some variation on this pattern will be tried in some areas. It should be noted, however, that in practice the spontaneous effort of many people is in the reverse direction. If possible, people move out into the country and come into the small town only for work. It is the village which is in danger of becoming a dormitory for town workers. The tendency is sound and is welcomed by many employers. This movement is restricted to certain income groups, because the cost of living in the country within reach of a town is expensive: railway fares and meals out are additional charges to be paid from salaries. Yet in spite of the wear and tear of daily travel and the half-digested lunch, the compensation during the short evening and the week-ends are considered well worth the effort involved.

The argument for the development of the small town, then, rests upon the assumption that better social amenities are possible for the larger sized group than for any smaller unit of people. This argument is based on nineteenth-century experience. The possibilities of creating a civic life without a city have been increased enormously since the war. "Civilization," said a young Rhodes Scholar

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to me once, "is a matter of physical communication. Here, in my State in America, I can get all the books I want; I can hear the best music and drama on the wireless; correspondence courses offer the best instruction of our best universities; and all these things are brought and delivered on my father's farm many miles from any neighbour. Yet that is not enough, as I realize now I'm at this university in flesh and blood contact with good teachers and plays and live music. Personal contact is needed for civilization; that is why roads have contributed as much to American culture as has the total educational set-up." This argument, however, does not necessarily imply the congregation of people as a necessary and persistent element in everyday life. It does imply the necessity of increased transport facilities so that this actual first-hand experience may be available. The wireless has given much to the country house, and has brought to many experiences which will not readily be forgotten. One night in a village school we listened in semi-darkness to a late broadcast of *Journey's End*, and that was a memorable experience talked about even now. Moreover, this medium has created a real desire to hear at first hand what at the beginning was only a chance hearing through the loud speaker.

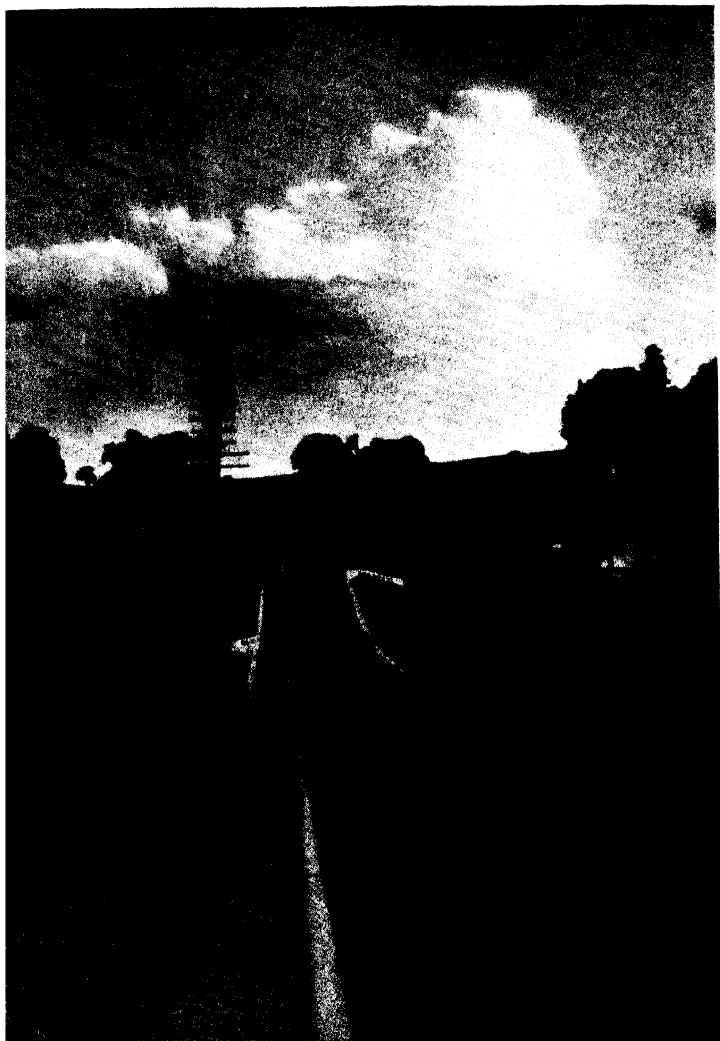
Thus the element of movement is essential as a basis of civilization. The means are available, and it is no longer essential that everybody should be housed in towns if they wish to be in contact with the cultural life of their day. Proximity is not contact. There is no antithesis in the full meaning of the terms "rural" and "civilized." It is not essential, therefore, that future development must be directed towards the extension of market towns or the building of new garden cities,

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though both, in fact, will occur. A rural civilization is possible and practicable.

The characteristic development of the countryside will be area development rather than that of towns or villages. Every tendency in rural life is towards area development, and there are good social and financial reasons in support of this. Main communications are the basis of this plan, linking the rural areas one with another, with the towns and with the ports. These must be fast, wide roads made for speedy traffic. From these will radiate to the farms, the factories, the schools, and the houses slower subsidiary roads such as, in fact, exist at the moment. There will be pivotal points in the area of local distributive centres—with local and area social facilities. The houses will be more evenly spread on the land—not of first agricultural value—in certain parts, with the necessary modern conveniences available. Most of the population will work within the area, though the travelling to work will not involve more time or cover greater distances than is now the custom with a large number of city workers. They will travel more for their social life. Only in a small country, and more particularly among poor people, does thirty miles seem a long journey for a visit to a theatre or a friend. Such "Rurban" development would maintain the best elements of rural life, and yet make possible a wider cultural life to many people.

"Rurban" is, of course, an American word, and the English and European imagination conjures pictures of the "American farmer, his telephone, his Ford, his banking account, and his wife in silk stockings." For traditional reasons, this picture is considered undesirable. In so far as the American farmer, along with others, has



*(Photo: Laurie Black.)*

**A New Highway.**



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often exploited the land ruthlessly as others have exploited the resources of his continent, the reaction is just. But Rural development in the New England States, where the English tradition is strongest, has produced some beautiful timbered houses standing back from the roads and away from their neighbours, without garden fences, and with a fine sense of rural beauty and a high regard for the trees on their land.

Such development will demand the fullest use of the techniques of modern life in the building of these areas, and will provide opportunities for the full inventive genius of the twentieth century. The builders of this new civilization will use the experience of the last century—for which the country has paid dearly—and design for modern conditions with the infinitely greater scope afforded by the use of modern materials and modern techniques. The economy of rural life could support such growth if the will and the imagination were active in the people. Such a revitalizing of our life might well produce an artistic revival in domestic arts which would prove worthy of our technical achievements.

## V

Such a development of rural England would maintain the best values of traditional English rural life without sacrificing the advantages, material and cultural, made available in the modern world. There are no insuperable technical difficulties. Most of the developments described as necessary are taking place piecemeal fashion in various places, but until there is some co-ordinated movement over large areas, the cumulative effect of these changes

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will not be felt, and, in fact, the chances of success for the present welcome changes are slight.

Such a concerted effort is most difficult to visualize in this country. Parliament is necessarily urban-minded because the majority of its members are elected by workers in the towns. Such people are unlikely to respond to a programme of rural development because their political education has been traditionally against Protection and the raising of food prices. Many electors are products of the machine age, and for them country life has no attraction as a way in which to live. It is unlikely therefore that any of the major parties will stake their political future on a rural civilization. The interests of these parties will tend to be confined to protecting the interests of their particular electorate. It should be noted, however, that whatever may be the final judgment on the Agricultural Acts of recent Parliaments, there has been a very welcome effort to approach the problem actively in various ways, by international agreement, by controlling imports, by marketing facilities, by wages boards, by Rural Housing Acts, and the like. The work of the Ministry of Agriculture has extended rapidly during the last thirty years. These are all valuable contributions, but the total effect is minimized because legislation is generally too late to counteract the general deterioration, and because such piecemeal legislation cannot rectify the general economic position of the rural areas. It is not likely, therefore, that a more imaginative approach will be initiated by the House of Commons, though the ultimate decisions of policy must be registered there.

Nor is it possible to feel very hopeful that the present population living in the rural areas will initiate any such

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movement. The general desire is to persist with the minimum change : “ ’Tis as ’twas,” they say is the “ message ” of the church bells. “ Let us bide ” is their hope ; “ we give it three years ” is their attitude towards a new venture. Although local government authorities in rural areas have progressed enormously in their outlook during their fifty years of existence, they must necessarily be restricted by the people they represent, and of whom they themselves are equally a part. Moreover, their powers do not extend over many of the issues outlined here ; and their territories are often too restricted to be effective. Some regional council would seem to be the minimum local unit for these purposes, with the county council as the major subsidiary unit. District councils will need replanning to cover the changing “ social region ” within the county ; and the parish council will become a “ community ” council for the immediate neighbourhood.

Obviously administrative changes of this kind will not produce new personnel, though not infrequently a marked change of outlook is noticeable as men are given increasing responsibility in public office. It will be some time before regional bodies will know how to think regionally, as experience of the Area Committees of the National Fitness Council is showing, because, although the goodwill towards the region as a whole may activate the members, the practical trend is to think in terms of this and that as self-contained units within the area. To think comprehensively and accurately is given to few minds.

Propaganda and education are short and long term methods of persuasion, and both are necessary processes in any development of the country. The regional broad-

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casts of the B.B.C. might contribute much, once the authorities of the Corporation are able to visualize the practical measures of influence open to them.

It is doubtful, however, if any of these sources of influence will initiate this process of co-ordinated effort, necessary as all will be in the fulfilment. Nor will an ideological attack produce anything but firm reaction in the minds of the majority living in the country at this time. Systems of ideas are seldom understood and invariably distrusted.

Some central regional and independent agency is needed, willing and able to prepare and collate the necessary evidence in a region, to summon for consultation the authorities concerned, and to focus gradually the attentions of the area towards this problem. It is facts, not flights of fancy, which will produce activity. There are already many workers in the field approaching the problem in a limited area. Increasingly these workers realize the wider implications of their work, and acknowledge these in their writings: but their own field of activity is necessarily specialized—must be so to be effective. In one county, for example, there are agricultural economists working on various aspects of farm accounts, biologists working on problems related to the agriculture of the area, scientists conducting long-term soil survey, business firms launching local industries, agricultural advisers visiting farmers, organizers for various vocational and non-vocational activities, research stations, county departments tackling their own problems such as poverty, health, crime, education, transport, and housing. The evidence is there, rapidly accumulating, and yet there is practically no cohesion, for example, between the agricultural research unit and

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the county organizers for the same purpose. In varying degrees this same position occurs in many other counties of this country. Until this information is co-ordinated, its practical significance will remain localized, and much of it stored in filed documents. Co-ordinated and extended to cover the basic survey as described earlier in this chapter, the facts would be convincing argument for action with local authorities, business officials, and the government. If this were started comprehensively in one region, and considered as a factual analysis of a given situation, a real contribution to rural reorganization would mature.

What body is there that might undertake this responsibility? It is unlikely that any regional voluntary body has the funds or the standing to undertake this work. The body concerned must have the status and the independence to approach a local authority and secure its voluntary co-operation, to be respected by the research worker, and to be able to induce the employer of labour to open his accounts for responsible analysis. No voluntary body has this standing. Nor is it likely that a local authority will undertake this work. The work of an authority is clearly defined; officials are so fully occupied with their own work that they seldom "have time to think, only to act," as one said recently. The university or university college of the region would seem to fulfil most of these conditions. Already, these institutions have established connections with the economic and social life of their area, and although many of these are adjustments to demands rather than the outcome of considered university policy, they also represent valuable experience as to what a university can and cannot do. The universities are of the area and yet independent;

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they are the means through which the Government, the local authority, and the business community work together for educational purposes ; yet no one of these elements dominates the whole. The independence of the university is as important as the close liaisons established with the area.

It has been shown previously that these liaisons have been developed during the last fifty years, and that there is no cohesion among these differing relationships and no clearly defined policy underlying the whole. There is a tendency to regard these "extra-mural" relationships as extraneous to the function of the university. The very name "extra-mural" is significant of this attitude. The first purpose of a university is academic research and teaching, and any extra-mural activity has to be justified, in the opinion of many responsible members of the university, as academic. Thus tutorial classes are expected to reach a standard of work comparable with the honours standards of the university.

Now, if a university is to fulfil its purpose in society, it is important that it should be free economically and spiritually. It is equally important that it should not sell this heritage for a "mess of pottage" by sacrificing the ideals of university teaching to the exigencies of the moment, nor can it afford to become an administrative body within the area, for it will then lose its independence. But by the freedom of its personnel, the integrity of its thought, and the richness of its tradition, the university is able to exercise an influence in the life of a nation out of all proportion to its own meagre resources.

In maintaining the importance of this long-term view, and at the same time accepting with compromise the contemporary demands of the life of the region, the

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university often obscures the real function it might fulfil in regional matters. At the same time it is only when the long-term view is opposed to the temporary compromises that the ideals of the university appear to conflict with the ideals of those who see the modern university making some contribution to regional and national problems.

The university might well be the research body of its area, the focal point of the workers preparing the material to be interpreted and used as the basis for legislative, economic, and social action in the area. Two universities within a region nearly achieved this in recent years. A scheme was drawn up with officials of the B.B.C. for making a quick survey of the conditions of certain areas within the region. The survey was to be comprehensive as outlined earlier in this chapter. Additional research and field staff were to be employed to implement the work of the existing college staffs, and some of the material was to be available for use as programme material for the B.B.C. The cost was not prohibitive, but in spite of the goodwill of the authorities concerned, the necessary finance could not be found. The total sum required to initiate the research work, in addition to the normal expenses of the departments concerned, was some £2,000 a year.

The first objective of the university in the field would be to co-ordinate the research work of its region concerning the problems of a given area. It might, by conference, decide on certain areas for examination. The investigators in the field and the research workers at the centre, biologists, geologists, economists, and the like, would compile the necessary information commencing with the general soil survey, and an analysis

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of the economic and social conditions of the area. Other workers would then discuss the significance of the collated material, and recommendations might be made with a view to increasing the economic returns of the area. It might be found that in a certain zone the present use of the land would never support a population without costing the local authority and government considerable sums of money for maintenance. Facts and figures would be available. In another zone, more intensive development might be shown to be possible if a certain programme, with estimated costs given, were to be undertaken; that a road here, a port there, a holiday industry or a light industry were necessary for the full exploitation of the region. It might be that an area had no future whatever, and the authority would be advised accordingly.

This information must be made available, however. A considerable proportion of English academic research remains unprinted, unused, and unknown except to the research workers in the field. Of certain long-term research this must necessarily be so, but some results of research are not made available as is necessary; there is a traditional academic reticence in this. "It is my job to do the research; others may use it if they wish, but that is not my concern." While this may be the definition of the research worker's responsibility, it does not apply to the university as a whole. It may be the function of the Extension Department, or some other, to make available the results of research work, in full for the research worker, in practical form for the legislator and the business man, and in general form for the people of the area. More money is needed immediately for publication. At the moment the universities struggle

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to maintain their staff at comparatively low rates of pay and have no surplus for this. Publishers can "carry" very few books of research each year in their general programme. This necessary dissemination of information is an urgent immediate problem.

Thus the universities, collaborating with various independent units in their area, might mobilize the material and the effort necessary to plan and rebuild the economic and cultural life in the rural hinterland. The university would become the research unit for the local authority ; it would embody and influence the highest and the best of the life of its area, enriching and enriched in the renewed life of its people. The adventure, the clear thought, the experience, and the investigation characteristic of a true university would be realized in the minds of its members and the general health of the spiritual life of the people.

It should be noted, however, that this does not mean that the university must become regional in outlook or organization. Universality is part of the contribution the university can make most vividly : to the regional problems of economic and cultural life it may bring the age-long and world-wide experience embodied in its learning and its thought. The long-term work of the university must continue ; alongside of this should be the functional research and inquiry directed towards the problems of the region. This function has been fulfilled admirably by some of the universities in relation to urban life. Perhaps some of the smaller universities may seize this opportunity in relation to their own rural areas.

If this happened, the effect would be considerable. It is an advantage and disadvantage that rural areas are governed by very few people. One advantage is that

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changes can be effected very quickly if there is agreement on principle, and the relations of the governors with the majority of their people and with the central government are such that they can influence both very considerably and effectively. This is not the moment to discuss the wisdom of these present relationships, but they must be noted as the means through which rural reform must in part be achieved. To ignore this group is to delay any hope of development until such time as the working-class in the rural areas become an active political force. This is unlikely to happen until the density of the working-class population in the rural areas is increased by the introduction of other workers from without, and this in considerable numbers. This, in turn, cannot happen until some economic rehabilitation of the countryside occurs. It is necessary, therefore, to mobilize the existing personnel and existing rural relationships recognizing that these are changing rapidly and that a rural society, such as is possible in the future, will create new relationships for modern conditions. It may be that such a society may throw new light on the problems of government by democracy.

The final authority for the controlled use of the land must rest with the Government. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1932, in spite of certain weaknesses inherent in the Act, has resulted in planning resolutions covering some twenty-four million acres of England and Wales. But more comprehensive and authoritative control is necessary. Departmental interests requiring land for roads, railways, and aviation, the overlapping functions of authorities established by the Ribbon Development Act and the Trunk Roads Act, and the demand for land by statutory authorities for

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public supplies of gas, electricity, water, and land-drainage schemes are often conflicting interests which the Town and Country Planning Act cannot control satisfactorily. The problem of land control is complicated and cannot be dealt with here, but it is to be noted that the Town Planning Institute has issued a report (May 1938), prepared by its National Survey and National Planning Committee, in which the problem is fully discussed and the operation of the Town and Country Planning Act is examined carefully. The report advises the formation of a National Planning Commission, responsible to the Government and to Parliament through some existing Minister, whose functions would be to prepare the necessary information for the planned use of the land, to advise and co-ordinate the various Government departments, statutory authorities, and others using the land, and to formulate “a national plan or policy on broad and flexible lines for the allocation and distribution of major land uses and developments.” A small permanent commission is recommended, which should act on an advisory basis in the first place, and, having thus proved its usefulness, later advise “the Government on the extension of its own powers and duties.” This commission would operate through divisional organizations in close co-operation with local authorities. Some such central clearing-house is necessary, provided that through its regional organizations the knowledge and skills of the people knowing local conditions are utilized. But, as the report suggests, the commission must not be advisory in the sense that the Government may or may not consult the commission. It must have power to secure the necessary information, to make its decisions effectively known, and to be assured that the various

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interests requiring land shall consult the commission before taking action. Some such scheme is urgently necessary—indeed, was needed long ago.

### VI

The organization of the materials of rural life is but one aspect of the problem. The objective of this reorganization is nothing less than a modern rural civilization. This is only possible for the free. Civilization is not possible for the poor, nor for those harassed by continual efforts to make ends meet ; there are certain minimum material requirements necessary in a community before it may even hope to enjoy and create artistic effort. If these standards are reached, there is every reason to believe that there will be an increasing spontaneous activity among the people towards the creation of drama, music, and arts ; that once again the free groups, so necessary to the spiritual welfare of a people, will arise spontaneously. It is unlikely, however, that the tradition of the last hundred years will be easily shaken. During that time, the major portion of the population has been removed from all artistic effort by their own indigence, the squalor of their conditions, the anxiety of their own life, and an increasing poverty of spirit. These influences will not easily be removed, in spite of the amazing way in which the creative spirit has been kept alive in so many of those living in the worst of these conditions. The Co-operative movement, the Trade Unions, and the Workers' Educational Association are creations of just such people. Even these activities are weakened by an increasing membership of

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those to whom the creative world of art is unknown. Many of these people have been removed from the heritage of the world. For religion, they have accepted the emotional surge of the evangelist; for art, they have had but the picture papers and the screen; for education, they have had but routine drill in elementary skills. The slow broadening of these experiences, welcome as it is, has not yet restored this heritage of thought and art to the people. Thus their own standards are low because this is the highest they have experienced.

This need, common to the countryman and the townsman, can be met partly by the higher standards of life which would make travel to concerts, theatres, and lectures possible, and partly by sending into the provinces the best art the modern world can provide. The results of the exhibition of pictures in provincial towns, organized by the British Institute of Adult Education, have shown that people will go in thousands to such an exhibition. The earlier experience of the Town and Country Concert Scheme, financed in part by the Carnegie Trustees, drew villagers from many miles around to hear good music well played. In a rather different way, the Arts League of Service fulfilled a similar purpose. These are indications of what might be done.

The present centralization of artistic endeavour is largely an economic and not a cultural problem. Actors, dramatists, and stage artists naturally concentrate in London because the main hope of employment is there. If the opportunities for employment were widespread, they, too, would spread more evenly through the country. A national theatre needs headquarters, but

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the nation cannot travel to Kensington or Stratford or the Old Vic for a theatre. Yet money for the theatre project is controlled and administered in London, and another theatre will be built and institutionalized. The dominance of London is a real menace to the welfare of the country as a whole. If art is to flourish it will arise from the spontaneous efforts of free people. Professional art must be restored to this people and not concentrated in the artificial theatres of one town. In the provision of opportunities for living experience of the arts, the countryside is even less adequately served than the town. It is true that library facilities are as good and sometimes better in the village than the average small town. There are facilities for adult education. There are classes for drama and music activities. But there is no provision in general for listening at first-hand to good music or good drama. Without such provision, the new rural life would be incomplete. With such opportunities of direct experience, the local creative effort will strive towards higher standards, the real in art will supplant the shadow-show of the mechanized world of amusement, and a new sense of ultimate values will replace the mundane compromises of to-day.

A rural civilization is possible in the modern world through the application of modern techniques and modern skills. England has unrivalled opportunities for realizing this, and restoring to the nation the stability and poise lost to so many of her people during the last century. This task, above all, is peculiarly suited to the native genius of the English people, who once again may make a major contribution to the art of living in society.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Town into Country*

"No wise man," said Dr. Johnson, "will go to live in the country unless he has something to do which can be better done in the country." But if urban people migrate to certain areas following the development of the countryside, even though the work can "be better done" there, is there any evidence that the townsman will respond to the non-material advantages of a rural civilization? Or has the tradition and experience of urban life destroyed the capacity to live happily except in towns and cities? It has been assumed in this book that this is not so, and that many people have this capacity and would gladly take any opportunity of achieving real contact with living things.

The evidence in support of this assumption is not easily marshalled. The divergence between town and country manners is so great that there appears to be no common basis. Perhaps it was necessary that the pioneers of industrial development should break with rural tradition if they were to succeed at all; and new materials for living in town established new modes of life. In consequence, two civilizations exist to-day side by side with but the minimum contact. In the past each has distrusted the other and each has exploited the other; now both of them have reached the limits of divergent

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growth, the towns becoming gargantuan and uncontrollable, while the villages have dwindled until they are unable to maintain a modern social life ; both have their idiots and their geniuses ; both have something to offer in the building of the future.

Yet the divergencies as manifest in the individual of the town group are often mannerisms of thought and action quickly bred by town life rather than fundamental traits of character. The ancestors of town people are generally rural people within three generations of family history, and age-long rural habits are not so easily denied. The exodus to the country for pleasure is one manifestation of this deep-rooted memory of contact with living things. The care with which city window-boxes, back-gardens, and other precious bits of land are tended shows that there is a real sentiment for the soil.

But modern industrial conditions have created other and conflicting sentiments of manufactured wealth and material values, and this basic feeling for the land is so often frustrated and distorted that only nostalgia for contact with the organic world remains—a weak sentimentality about country life. Journalism panders to this with vivid accounts of the quixotic in rural life ; the townsman hears the ancient shepherd broadcasting his last inanities to a gaping world : Gaffer gavottes for his pleasure. The townsman is amused, though stirred uneasily by the deep sentiment he seeks to satisfy. And the countryman smiles too, for he knows that a shepherd is surely “ mazed ” to “ talk afore the like of they,” and knows that any shepherd would give the prettiest thatched cottage in the village for the bungalow with water laid on and damp-proof courses.

Our endeavours to satisfy this rural sentimentalism

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have created many new social problems for our own and succeeding generations to solve. The most obvious example is the shifting of urban people to the countryside immediately adjacent to the town. Many factors have contributed to this migration, such as the quest for health, the profit-seeking activities of "real" estate dealers, moral indignation against slums, the fear of enemy aircraft, the development of modern transport, and other contradictory motives. The desire "to get into the country" is, however, a major concern of many of the people who move from the town. But, in spite of state control, exercised piecemeal fashion through various local authorities, the total effect is so chaotic and without social plan that new problems of some magnitude are being created which will prove difficult to solve and expensive to liquidate. Good agricultural land is cemented under roads, houses, and garages—thus carelessly we waste the basic wealth of the country. The new tenants find the wear and tear of daily travel considerable, and the additional cost of the house-rent, together with the weekly travel charges, make heavy inroads in the weekly wage. The cost of living is higher in the new area for those transferred from the old slum quarters. There is no feeling of neighbourhood on the "estate" such as existed even in the meanest street in the East End. Restrictions imposed by the authorities, admirable as they may be, only serve to emphasize the bleakness of this new life; the "lodger" and sheds are forbidden together with pigeons and poultry. The council of one northern city in its wisdom banned the public-house altogether from these estates, but in order that the new estate tenants should be appeased, built "community centres" to "look like pubs"! The new

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estates are full of sunshine and space and fresh air, but the friendliness and proximities of the street have gone. Community centres are being built and tenants' associations are being formed to fill the social void, but these will only grow slowly. In these and other ways this major quest of our day for a new life with some relation to living things and to the land becomes lost in a maze of practical difficulties, most of which might have been avoided if some policy had been thought out clearly in advance of the need. Once again the underlying impulse to seek the land is frustrated, and this true sentiment, being unsatisfied, leaves only a rural sentimentalism for the modern man.

The influence of this sentimentalizing about rural life is to be observed in the social administration and organization of smaller urban centres. It is not uncommon for the successful business man in these towns to buy a country house and try to crash the county social bar. This is not easy, but the incentive is strong. Consequently this type of man leaves the town and its affairs—for "County" seldom mingles in urban matters.

Meanwhile the less imaginative and less successful business man dominates the councils of the rural-urban centre; in consequence the policy of these councils is generally devoid of vision, and small cliques dominate in political and social affairs. The few socially minded people living in the town live a life of isolation from local politics, thankful if they may live somewhat free from the littleness of the bourgeoisie. On the outskirts of the town are the larger houses whose occupants might well help—sometimes they are people of some distinction retired in the area—but who will not mix with the petty bickerings of the town cliques. Thus the small town

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remains reactionary and often pettily corrupt with the viciousness of little minds. This is a major problem of urban government in rural areas, created in part by modern rural sentimentalism.

Modern literature reflects this widespread interest. The spate of pre-war books concerned with technical and social problems of the countryside produced some of the best writing of the first thirty years of this century. The extent of this interest is seen in the space given to rural affairs in many daily and weekly publications. In such ways a large public, vitally interested, can live vicariously, if only for a moment, with people of the soil who themselves are pictured as living wholly and creatively.

Even in this vicarious living the townsman finds understanding difficult, for his own experience is so removed from the organic life of the countryside. The urban world is of manufactory, of made things; the townsman has built a gimcrack town with mathematical accuracy; two and two, he knows, make four. By taking thought, by political agitation, he has added a cubit to his stature. By sacrifice, energy, and effort, he has ameliorated his conditions. Meanwhile the organic world of living things, the world of creation in which the uncertain and the primæval war against man's efforts, the world of time past and time to come, this world is so far removed as to be almost incomprehensible. The all-embarrassing present denies the future for him. He plans to avoid the immediate catastrophe rather than to fulfil his destiny.

Here the conflict in the mind of the modern townsman is most apparent, for the mannerisms of thought and action created by modern industrial conditions make

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discussion and action on rural matters extremely difficult. The land can be developed only on a long-term policy beside which five-year plans seem of no significance, yet the urgency of present discontent in urban life demands action now for remedying this and that. The present needs are importunate and must be satisfied.

This sense of urgency is apparent in our legislation, most of which is concerned with the removal of abuses ; when some social problem becomes acute, only then are steps taken to devise some remedy. This is, in no small measure, true of the activities of English government from the parish council to the House of Commons. The urgency of existing circumstances dominates our social thought. Schemes for "Special Areas," for medical services, for agricultural marketing, for clearing litter, for the preservation of rural England, for a multitude of related projects are evolved, administered, and departmentalized for the main purpose of immediate alleviation of some particular issue. In social legislation progress is even slower. Common policy and action seems atrophied in the multitudinous councils and departments of democracy.

The habits of mind of the town-dwellers are contrary to long-term thinking. Next week's pay envelope is future enough for most of these, and that is sometimes uncertain. The half-yearly dividend or the projected investment spans the horizon of many another. Thus the urgency of the present destroys their perspective. This influence of the immediate can be seen in the nineteenth-century religious organizations, for example, the Primitive Methodists or the Salvation Army, which arose from the needs of the new industrial population. A sympathetic comparison of the beliefs of these modern

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religious bodies with those of the older (and "established") religious organizations illustrates the dominance of present circumstance even in their worship. The future, in contrast to the present, was stressed as being in heaven, and their impromptu prayers were full of urgent pleadings for tangible compensations to be awarded at death. They were importunate for aid and militant against current evils. The older religions, on the other hand, displayed more assurance and less importunity ; indeed sometimes they seemed negligent of the conditions of their followers. Their faith in the ultimate triumph of their belief seemed almost urbane, because they believed there was a future, where life on earth would be good, in relation to which present evils seemed but a temporary human aberration, merely a stage on the way.

Now, these urban people are to-day the political majority in the country. Indeed many of the leaders of the working-class movement in the "thirties" of this century received their training in the Bethels of Methodism, and transferred their religious fervour to political issues. The "many mansions" became practical politics. The working-class movement thus passed into the control of men produced by industrial conditions and industrial thought. Even the majority of other politicians depended upon the votes of industrial workers. Urban programmes and urban problems continued to dominate English politics in post-war England, although rural sentimentality was very evident. Only a series of economic and international crises have kept the problem of the countryside in the political programmes of successive governments. Only war or the fear of war has aroused the people to some sense of value with regard to agriculture. The story of farming in war-time is well

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known. At this moment the fear of war is directing national attention to the derelict state of our second largest industry, the countryside is a matter of concern, and more is being done for agriculture now than for many decades past. Attempts are being made to control imports, stabilize prices, improve marketing facilities, to offer better working and living conditions for the farm-worker, and to educate the farming community. These measures are, however, primarily emergency legislation until such time as they are related to a long-term policy of land development.

Consequently the countryman has little faith in these town proposals. He has accepted bounty as his right from the squire for countless generations. He accepts these efforts similarly, and hopes for more, though he has no faith in these urban proposals, and no young man will turn back from the town for these allurements. Until there is a reconstructed rural life with a future, with working conditions and social activities comparable in their kind with those offered by the town, there will be no permanent migration of fresh blood to the countryside. The problem is, therefore, no longer a technical matter concerned only with agriculture, basic as that may be ; it is a matter of social reconstruction, of rebuilding with modern resources, with new hope and new prospects. Rural sentimentality is not enough.

A true rural sentiment would demand policy and would not be content with compromise and emergency legislation. But discussions of fundamentals are not welcome in these days. The Englishman has never recovered from his terror of the Civil War of the seventeenth century when ideas led to war. Since that time he has endeavoured to follow the advice of the gentleman of the

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eighteenth century and control his natural enthusiasms. Thus it has become part of the English code and the hall-mark of good breeding to avoid all discussion of fundamental issues which might lead to faction. This code was severely tested during the nineteenth century, when the industrial conditions were such as to provoke new ideologies and new factions ; it seemed that some clash of factions would result. The "Presbyter" of the seventeenth century was not denounced more vehemently than the "Capitalist" of the nineteenth century. But "reasonableness" prevailed, and schemes for rationalization, conciliation boards, co-operatives, and proposals for State amelioration were devised. Thus the main issues remained unsolved, and it seemed to many that the new controls were but "the old priest writ large."

Similarly to-day in rural affairs, plans and schemes for economic and social endeavour are compromises and not solutions. But sentimentality is satisfied. Women's Institutes sing zestfully of building Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land, and proceed to listen to lectures on making a wholesome diet for a family with thirty odd shillings a week for life. Such are the compromises of our day, the "confabulations of the weasel."

The initiative in social endeavour has passed, only temporarily perhaps, from this country to those governed by dictators. For they have awakened in many a new enthusiasm for living. They have produced some design for living. England has a heritage of great human endeavour, and has made a noteworthy contribution to the art of social organization. For the moment, however, an academic rectitude stifles our imagination. We are eternally busy with present emergencies, scurrying back-

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wards and forwards, ant-like, aware of our dilemma and frightened at the shadow of our thought. We seek escape in our amusements. Romantic novels, swash-buckling historical plays, besmirching biographies, comedies of doubtful manners, are characteristic of this escape. Good companionship is the most the British contemporary theatre offers to its people, or is expected to give. Repertory companies in small towns repeat, later, a poor image of the London success. Village players perform with local applause life below stairs, and give the profits to the district nurse passing rich on her forty pounds a year. Left-wing writers are indeed concerned with social problems, though the immediate threat of tyranny diverts their attention from the future to the present. W. H. Auden, for example, thinks that the creative work of art must wait while the artist writes of political problems for the cause of the free. Sean O'Casey bemoans "this murdherin' hate." *Judgment Day*, surprisingly successful in London, cuts its problem with a melodramatic pistol shot, as if the future may thus easily be clarified. Indeed, the Crazy Gang and the Marx Brothers seem the only rational beings in this world, for they, at least, are free.

This disintegration of social purpose in democratic countries is asserted vociferously by the advocates of dictatorship. They point to the social integration achieved by the resolution of one man with clearly defined objectives. There are many answers to this challenge, and good democrats have given them frequently. Answers, however, do not remove the validity of the charge. The plight of the "Special Areas" and of agriculture—a major industry—are due in no small measure to this disintegration of thought which negatives

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long-term planning and encourages opportunism in action. Nor can these conditions be altered by legislation alone, for each of these areas is vitally dependent upon international trading conditions. No five, ten, or other mystic-multiple year plan can solve these problems until there is some measure of agreed social philosophy activating social legislation.

Even the apologists of the countryside and of agriculture are too frequently caught in this web of compromise. Revolting against urban life, knowing how often agriculture has been the catspaw of politics, they propose to isolate the towns and plead for a revived rural life outside the city walls. They offer food and holidays to the townsman, and ask in return for a fixed price with protection from foreign imports. They seek to solve the problem by isolating a part from the whole, though the future of the countryside is identical with the future of England. The history of farming alone illustrates this axiomatic truth.

Reformers and planners too often unduly weight their arguments towards one or another *form* of society. Thus some will advocate a hundred towns of some 50,000 population as a solution; others seek to revivify the village; others plan for garden cities; others over-emphasize the results following a revival of agriculture, while there are others who found their future on some new process or some financial wizardry.

A whole approach is necessary. The countryside is not a series of isolated areas removed from towns: nor are people essentially and wholly urban or rural—though the conditions of life have produced differences, losses and gains, some of which are socially important. Fortunately, there is no antagonism between the countryman

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and the townsman, though there is much misunderstanding and some distrust. The farmers and others suspect the official governing rural life these days, for he is usually a townsman. They suspect that the new senior schools will encourage boys and girls still more to leave the land. Similarly, many a townsman, anxious to organize the countryman for political and educational purposes, has returned disappointed, believing the countryman to be aloof, proud, reactionary, and slow-witted. But these are not antagonisms. Only the theorists develop antagonism when they postulate either rural or town life as alternative ideals. The future of society is surely neither wholly in the one nor the other.

Industrial progress has made possible a new life in rural England and established new standards of material comforts and social administration. Rural England, too, has a contribution to make, in the social heritage that it has preserved through the cataclysmic changes of the last century. Meanwhile, it may be noted that underneath the townsman's sentimentality is a basic and true sentiment for reconciliation with living things, though urban conditions have so distorted this natural relationship of man that when the townsman does venture into the country he often appears as a stranger in a strange land. The sentiment is there and can be capitalized in any planning for the future. This is of importance, for civilization is a thing of the spirit, and the human spirit needs contact with Nature. This is a truth of individual and social experience. This need is more than desire ; it is a primeval necessity for man.

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